

Great Churches of America

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I. Mount Olivet Lutheran Church

Minneapolis, Minnesota

THROUGHOUT this land, Christian congregations are building new temples of hope. Believing that the magnitude of their contribution should be better understood, The Christian Century this year sets out to find, study and describe twelve great churches of America. The quest will take us to all parts of the United States and to cities, towns and open country.

Our nation was founded by men of faith. The first buildings they erected in the wilderness, after their own shelters, were churches. Today our country has good reason to appreciate the worth of the ministry which its churches are rendering, but all too often their hard-won victories are taken for granted. Too generally the sacrificial achievements of these communities of outreaching compassion are underrated or ignored. This series of articles represents an effort to have these contributions understood and acknowledged. If these studies of successful churches help to bring a belated recognition to all, if they inspire other congregations to fulfill with greater distinction their high mission, they will have served their purpose.

The splendor of illuminated towers, the beauty of lofty arches and the grandeur of masses of masonry are often accepted as signs of greatness in a church. But a church can have all these and still miss greatness. The truly successful church lives in the dignity of redeemed personal character, in the integrity of happy and devoted homes, and in civic virtue, courage and compassion.

I. How Mount Olivet Was Chosen

To discover the churches in which an ever new Christian life is finding contemporary structure, we addressed an inquiry to more than 100,000 Protestant ministers in this country. We asked each to name for us the most successful church he knew in a large city, in a small city and in village or open country. When the returns came in, we tabulated the choices of the ministers by regions, taking a church of each of the three categories in the northwest, the southwest, the southeast and the northeast.

The twelve churches thus nominated by the ministers of America are being studied by the editors of The Christian Century. The report on the first of these studies, made in the northwest, is presented herewith. Others will appear monthly during 1950. We invite the readers of The Christian Century to come with us now on a trip to the Mount Olivet Lutheran Church (Augustana) of Minneapolis.

Minneapolis is a city of more than a half-million people, but its taxi drivers all seem to know where

Mount Olivet Lutheran Church is located. At 7:30 on a midweek morning one of them told The Christian Century's representative that he was always taking people out to this church on the south side of the city, often "at unholy hours like this," and that whenever he passed he saw automobiles parked there. "Strange a church should have so much going on," he mused. He did not know the pastor's name.

Mount Olivet is a busy place. It has had to be busy, for it has grown from 331 members in 1938 to over 5,000 in 1950. This remarkable feat is the more significant because there is nothing bizarre about the church or its methods of work. The soaring Gothic lines of its new \$750,000 sanctuary will never be mistaken for a theater or country club. The church regularly holds three services each Sunday morning to accommodate the multitude which crowds into its doors, but they come to join in dignified services of worship, not to see religious vaudeville. The people listen attentively to brief biblical expositions given in a quiet voice by the tall young pastor, not to homiletical rabble-rousing or religious soothing syrup.

What then makes Mount Olivet Lutheran Church (Augustana) one of the great churches of America? What is the secret that has in a little more than a decade increased the size of this congregation by 1,500 per cent? Or is there any secret? In any case, what does this church have to teach Christians in other churches concerning people's need for faith and the church's ability to meet it?

The Christian Century's study has led to the conclusion that Mount Olivet has no "secret" of success. Visits to the church and interviews with pastor, staff and members, with public officials and citizens of the community have revealed no magic formulas, no novel "techniques." A number of factors which have come to light have a bearing on the church's growth, and these will be described. But neither singly nor in combination do they fully explain this remarkable congregation. Something more subtle is involved. What the vital element is that makes this one of the great churches of America is discussed at the conclusion of this article.

II. The Urban Setting

A superficial explanation of Mount Olivet's growth ascribes it all to the church's fortunate location in Minneapolis. The city grew from 492,000 in 1940 to an estimated 560,000 in 1950. A large part of this increase has settled in the southwest part of the city where Mount Olivet is lo-

Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, was chosen in The Christian Century's poll of ministers as the church most worthy of study in a city with population of more than 100,000 in the states of Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington and Oregon. Other churches frequently voted for in this group were the Hennepin Avenue Methodist and Central Lutheran churches, also in Minneapolis.

cated, 50 blocks from the center of the metropolis of Minnesota. Here the church stands in a new community of young families, of whom about 80 per cent own their homes, which have an average value of from \$12,000 to \$15,000. Rentals, which are scarce, are the highest in the city. The educational level of the people in the neighborhood is also the highest in the city. Most of the church's employed members have white collar jobs, and their estimated average annual income is \$3,600. The fact that the church is connected with the Augustana Lutheran denomination is probably a help in attracting members, the state being Minnesota. But the point is debatable, since half the present members of the church did not come originally from that denomination.

These population facts create a favorable environment, and they have undoubtedly contributed substantially to the growth of Mount Olivet. But other churches in the community, even other Lutheran churches, have not benefited from these conditions to the same extent. Some of these other congregations were organized after the First World War, when Mount Olivet got its start. If the lack of a hampering tradition, if a young membership helped the one, why did they not help the others? Environmental explanations simply do not explain.

III. Lives are Changed

Closer to the realities of the situation is the fact that a great many people willingly—even eagerly—affirm that their lives have been utterly changed as a result of the ministry of Mount Olivet. The church is appropriately named. Like the "green hill far away," it is a place of spiritual travail made victorious by the love and power of God. One cannot talk with its members, as our editor did, without discovering that this church is making a tremendous difference in their lives.

Women gratefully describe how homes once broken have been re-established on a solid foundation of enduring affection. Former alcoholics eagerly tell of their liberation from the living death of abject addiction. Men who once suffered the tortures of mental or nervous breakdown quietly affirm that this church has helped them to recover wholeness and peace of mind. Once indifferent people who acknowledge that they were sunk in self-centered materialism declare that here they have found the real meaning of work. Young people speak of the church with love and serve through it with devotion.

Mount Olivet has a reputation for helping people. Its telephone rings often with calls for help, but it also often rings with reports of inner victories won. A sizable correspondence is carried on relating to spiritual problems. People come to the church to discuss their problems, which range all the way from grave spiritual struggles to the difficulties of little David Harrison, who stormed into the church office while our representative was there. "I'm being chased," panted this six-year-old. "Those boys are after me. Please call my mother." Outnumbered on his way home from school, this young citizen instantly knew what to do. Like many an older person, he hotfooted it to Mount Olivet for help. Like them, he got it.

Lives are being transformed through the work of this church, and this fact is a far more important element in its success than its location. But that is not the whole story,

although it comes close to being the major part of it. Men, women and children walk in newness of life as the result of the work of other churches as well. We must look farther.

IV. A Leader Who Ministers

Most of the notable growth of Mount Olivet has occurred since Reuben K. Youngdahl became its minister in 1938, so everybody except himself is certain that its development is due to his tireless labor. Dr. Youngdahl is now 38 years of age. He stands over six feet in height and is powerfully built. He was a star athlete at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota, and when he attended Augustana Theological Seminary at Rock Island, Illinois, he earned part of his way as a professional basketball player. In 1945 the junior chamber of commerce of Minneapolis named him the city's "outstanding young man" of the previous year. More recently his alma mater conferred upon him the doctor of divinity degree in recognition of his achievement in building a small congregation into a church almost twice as large as any other in his synodical denomination. There might have been a slight element of penance in Gustavus Adolphus' act, for when Reuben Youngdahl was a student there some teachers made no secret of their impression that he was not the young man in his graduating class most likely to attain eminence in the ministry.

Dr. Youngdahl does not regard himself as a big-city pulpiteer. He still thinks of himself as a small-town pastor. His conception of his job runs something like this: God wills the success of the church. God's power can accomplish his will if he can find a minister and people through whom he can work. That means that the minister who is ready to become God's servant "has got what it takes"—the Word of God that can change the lives of people in any condition. The pastor of Mount Olivet makes a big point of conscientiously "putting in his time." He tries to make himself available, in person and in spirit, at all times, so that God can work through him. So he reaches his office by 8:30 in the morning and often works until midnight.

He thinks it is a disgrace that ministers are such good insurance risks. He says that he was nearly "ruined for life" in an earlier parish because of habits he acquired in a field of limited possibilities, even though he opened a closed church for another denomination and built it, in addition to his own, into a full-time service. Twelve years ago, against the advice of many of his best friends and at a substantial loss in salary, he accepted the call of struggling Mount Olivet because he "wanted to work for God." "I know what the power of God can do for people," he says. "As long as there are people who need God, I'll keep on working. Not until we dare to go beyond our strength do we earn the right to tell people what the power of God can do for them."

After he came to Mount Olivet a year-long bout with tuberculosis, which kept him in bed and left him with a collapsed lung, gave him a basis in experience for this conviction. During that year he directed a building campaign from his bed, meeting the building committee there and raising money by telephone for the Mount Olivet church, seating 465, which preceded the present structure. When he recovered, he convalesced with such vigor that in

six years that building was outgrown and the present one had to be started.

Pastor Youngdahl keeps closely in touch with people. During much of the year he spends the hours from five to eight each evening for five days a week making 15-minute calls in the homes of people who need him, including especially prospective members. His staff arrange the calls by telephone and schedule them in sequence so that a minimum of time is lost between visits. Three evenings a week, after the calling schedule, he and his wife are hosts to 30 to 50 church members who are invited to visit the modest Youngdahl home. Every year most of the 1,350 families visit or are visited by the pastor.

Dr. Youngdahl also spends a good deal of time downtown with the men of his congregation and working with the Minneapolis Society for the Blind, the Mayor's Committee on Human Relations and other community groups. In the summer he supervises a boys' camp which a group of Mount Olivet men have bought for the church.

The Mount Olivet minister has little patience with traditional conceptions of preaching. He speaks very simply, grounds his message in the Bible, uses illustrations effectively. His 20- to 25-minute sermons have given currency to the tale that he times them by popping a coughdrop into his mouth; when it dissolves, he stops. Once when he ran overtime he discovered that he had mistaken a button for a coughdrop! Or so claims the local tradition. But with three morning services, he could hardly preach longer. The services, which last for an hour, open at 9:30, 10:45 and 12, with fifteen minutes between. (Last Thanksgiving, Mount Olivet had three services, while five of the downtown churches in Minneapolis had one.) Each Sunday service opens with a processional by the 100-voice choir and closes with the minister and staff members standing at the main door to greet the people. On the morning the Century's observer attended the services, Dr. Youngdahl seemed to greet by name nearly all those who left by the center aisle. More than 3,000 worshipers participated in the three services that day, which followed an earlier communion.

Reuben Youngdahl is one of ten children of Swedish immigrant parents. His father was for 45 years a grocer in south Minneapolis and a charter member of Messiah Augustana Lutheran Church, one of the first congregations of that denomination to hold services in English. The children attended Gustavus Adolphus, the denominational college. Each of the six sons has attained eminence in his calling. Peter is now a lawyer in Los Angeles. Carl is director of music in Augustana College, Sioux Falls, Iowa, and a composer. Oscar, who died a few years ago, served two terms in Congress. Benjamin is dean of the school of social work in Washington University, St. Louis. Luther is governor of Minnesota.

Last spring Reuben telegraphed Benjamin: "I read *Time* this week. You should read *Newsweek*." Benjamin replied: "Both of us should read *Collier's*." The story of Reuben and his new church, which had just been dedicated, appeared in *Newsweek*. *Time* had featured Benjamin's notable work in St. Louis. *Collier's* carried an article about the far-reaching program of social reform on which Republican Governor Luther Youngdahl is staking his political future in Minnesota and the nation.

There can be no question that the able ministry of Reuben K. Youngdahl is a very important element in the phenomenal development of Mount Olivet Church. But it is not the whole answer.

V. All-Member, All-Year Evangelism

The most new members ever received at one time into a Lutheran church in America joined Mount Olivet on November 5, 1944. On that All Saints Sunday, 469 persons were received. On the following Palm Sunday 276 joined. Thus 745 new members, including 502 adults, came into the church that year, since members are received on these two Sundays. The persistent evangelistic witness of the church is conducted by an aptly designated "Committee on Life and Growth," headed by Gerald Patsey, a businessman. That year the committee had a membership of 1,200.

While its efforts come to focus on All Saints and Palm Sundays, the committee works throughout the year. Every church member is urged to take part in the work of evangelism. Dr. Youngdahl believes that this is the principal task of the church. He and his staff carry as much as possible of the routine of the church so that the members may enter into their greatest privilege—that of Christian witness. Thus insurance men report "prospects" to the church as well as to their offices.

In this evangelistically minded church, things like this happen: A man who was hired to drive a bus to gather up children for the Sunday school brought his own family and joined the church. The woman who meets newcomers to Minneapolis with a "Welcome Wagon" filled with samples from stores carries invitations to Mount Olivet. Not long ago she joined the church herself. A salesman member of the church, riding with another salesman, fell into a heated argument over whose church was better. Before they reached their destination they discovered that both belonged to Mount Olivet.

One member of Dr. Youngdahl's staff is responsible for public relations, which includes the enlistment of new members. Miss Aldys Holmes keeps a record of all prospective members and makes the first call upon them. The church subscribes to a weekly bulletin giving information concerning all removals in Minneapolis. Members turn in names of prospective members. Information is gathered from the Minneapolis Church Federation, from the transfer department of the Augustana Church, from the newspapers, from the cards every person who attends the church is asked to fill out. Then the lay visitation committee, with which Miss Holmes works, makes its plans. Each prospect is assigned to a family, and this family calls, invites the newcomer to church, renders any neighborly service it can. New residents receive a letter of welcome from the church. The committee sends out couples, sometimes as many as 100 at a time, to call systematically in the homes of new people. Persons who are ready to join the church are asked to sign an application for membership.

Each prospective adult member is enrolled in a membership class, which meets six times on Sunday evenings before either All Saints or Palm Sunday. Under the direction of the pastor they study *The Lutheran Handbook* by Amos John Trever and other instruction materials to gain

an understanding of the meaning of the step they are about to take. When the appointed Sunday arrives, the entire group takes its place up front in the church and all make their confession of faith in Jesus Christ. No distinction is made between those who are transferring their membership and those who are making the good confession for the first time. Then they sing "My Faith Looks Up to Thee," and the choir responds, "Take the Name of Jesus with You."

Each new member is put to work, looking after old members or new prospects. Every family is urged faithfully to maintain a family altar, with Bible reading and prayer. Over 100 former Roman Catholics have joined the church, as well as people from many other denominations. Members are expected to attend church and to sign the card announcing their presence. Attendance records are kept. Absentees promptly receive a "We missed you" card. Persistent stay-aways are dropped after every effort has been made to reclaim them. The Mount Olivet church roll has no place for inactive members!

All this is organized, purposeful. But evangelism at this church is as natural as breathing. A favorite song of its staff and members may often be heard in its halls or classrooms:

Lord, lay some soul upon my heart,
And love that soul through me;
And may I humbly do my part
To win that soul for thee.

Nobody who seeks to understand greatness in a church would leave out of account the evangelistic concern which runs strongly through everything that happens at Mount Olivet.

VI. Church Adopts Business Methods

Part of Mount Olivet's job of making the kingdoms of this world the Kingdom of God it does through its own use of good business method. The church has an employed lay assistant who acts as purchasing agent. It owns a fleet of three automobiles to give its staff mobility. It operates on a budget, as any business must. Like a business it does not make out its budget until it learns from the members what its income will be.

Because he believes laymen should major on the church's most rewarding work—evangelism—Dr. Youngdahl assumes responsibility for raising the more than \$175,000 which Mount Olivet requires annually for current expenses and retirement of the debt on its building. When the time comes to raise the money, the pastor invites ten or twelve men a day to lunch with him in a private dining room at a downtown club. To successive groups he presents the needs of the church as defined by the finance committee, answers questions on anything the men may have on their minds, and takes their pledges. In two weeks he receives about 125 commitments, meanwhile seeing some other men individually in their offices.

Then follows a week of five "smorgasbord suppers" at the church, to each of which one-fifth of the membership is invited by telephone. The church paper informs everybody that they will be asked for pledges at these suppers, which start promptly at 6:30 and end on the dot at 8. Colored slides are shown of the church, its youth camp and other activities. The pastor sets forth the church's work and

needs and members are invited to make pledges for its support. Churchwomen prepare the smorgasbord supper, the cost of which averages about 35 cents per person and comes out of the church budget, as does that of the club luncheons. No printed material is used in this campaign except the pledge cards, which are sometimes mimeographed. About 1,000 pledges are made during this week. Another 300 to 400 pledges come in response to letters written persons who have been unable to attend any meeting. A total of 1,500 pledges is made, covering families and individuals. One member of the church staff, working with Dr. Youngdahl, gives most of her time to finance.

Gordon Ballhorn, vice-president of General Mills and chairman of the finance committee of Mount Olivet, pushed everything aside to talk about his church to *The Christian Century*. "I hadn't been inside a church for twenty years," he said. "I revolted against the church as soon as I left home. Seven years ago my wife and I dropped in on a service in the little church Mount Olivet then occupied. The minister caught my attention by quoting a line from a popular song to illustrate a point he was making. That interested me. It couldn't have happened in churches I had known. When I left I had something I could take with me. We went back, and we've been going back ever since. We always receive something to carry home. This church has a religion for living. It has color, power. This preacher gets you, then the church gets you."

When our representative tried to pin him down to questions of budget and organization he answered patiently and factually. "But don't miss the point," he said more than once. "The thing that counts here is the spirit. I am in business and I don't discount the importance of sound method. But you are not dealing with a business here. This is a church, and its spirit is what makes things happen."

In another downtown office, after being reminded of what had happened to many churches in the years following 1929, a banker was asked if he thought the church could pay its debt. "Don't forget," he replied, "that Mount Olivet's membership is largely composed of young families who believe tremendously in their church. They are growing and the church grows with them, stronger every year."

This is not to say that finances are easy sailing at Mount Olivet. A church which has built two sanctuaries within a decade, and within a year of its dedication is using to their limit the facilities of its latest building, strains its members' purses as a growing boy strains his last year's suit. Its facilities for religious education are inadequate, even though classrooms are used repeatedly in multiple services. In addition to its church and school buildings which now stand in the middle of the two square blocks of churchyard, Mount Olivet plans to erect a youth center as soon as it can muster the resources. At the present rate of retirement of the church debt, it may take five years before the members are ready to venture again. The church depends upon its members for support, and none have large means. What it does will have to be done without the assistance of millionaire "angels."

An important but still not decisive element in Mount Olivet's achievement is its partial success in developing an organized life adapted to the kind of urban community that surrounds it. As in many churches, the manifold mini-

tries of the women of its membership are well planned and carried out. Unlike most churches, it has a strong men's club with more than 600 members which is doing an excellent piece of work. Its church school has an enrollment of 1,221, with 90 teachers and an average attendance of 900. A vacation school attracts from 400 to 500 pupils. Its "Cathedral of the Pines" youth camp accommodates 50 at a time in week-long camping periods.

VII. An Urban Church Organization

The quality of religious education work suffers somewhat because the church has difficulty in keeping abreast of the demand for more teachers, space and materials. The school added 218 pupils in 1949. Miss Ruth Peterson, a former high school teacher who is director of the church school, hopes that the time will come when pressure on the facilities of the church will let up sufficiently so that better work can be done in teacher training. That will permit the use of better teaching materials and will also help in other ways.

Youth activities of the church include Luther League meetings, a girls' service club and "singspirations." One of these last brought together on a Sunday evening in December, when a *Century* observer happened to be on hand, around 500 youngsters from grades 6 to 12 from four neighboring churches and Mount Olivet. They sang Christmas carols and other songs, some very much on the "popular" side, attended classes and played games in the church hall, leaving at eight in chartered buses with the youngsters cheering their traffic police escorts.

Because he considers the Christian training of future church leaders of the utmost importance, athletic Pastor Youngdahl heads the sessions of the youth camp in northern Minnesota. Assistant Minister Richard Hillstrom works with him here as in many other activities. They don't waste their time, as letters from the campers indicate. One said: "I have changed a great deal since I was up at camp. It may not be noticeable, but I have a wonderful feeling inside. I can't exactly explain it, but I know that God has taken my hand and he will always guide me through my life." A boy wrote: "Dr. Youngdahl, after my parents were divorced about this time last year, I lost for a while all hope and I regret to add, got farther away from God. I could not see how that was meant, to the eyes of God, to be the right thing. But after Sunday night my whole way of living changed. I see now, if not before, what God is and means to me."

The Mount Olivet men's club is one of the most successful of its kind. To its monthly dinners in the church it brings top-flight speakers on civic and social questions. Nobody is charged a cent, but an offering is taken which not only pays all expenses but supports much of the youth work of the church. Invitations go by a sort of telephone chain reaction. The affair is always precisely timed, like everything else at Mount Olivet. A principal objective, says the minister, is to demonstrate that Christian men can thoroughly enjoy themselves. Climax of the year's fun comes at the annual ladies' night dinner, cooked and served by men, when the poor wives have to try to eat with hinge-handled forks and covered spoons while camera men from Minneapolis papers "shoot" their discomfiture. The club takes pride in its claim that more men than

women attend church and it does its competent best to keep them coming.

Bradshaw Mintener, a Methodist layman, who holds an important position in the Pillsbury Milling company, says that Mount Olivet men, including their minister, do more than their share in community activities. Mr. Mintener directed the Minneapolis Community Self-Survey when Dr. Youngdahl was chairman of the Mayor's Committee on Human Relations. This survey and other work of the committee, aided by labor unions, eventually resulted in the enactment of a Minneapolis fair employment practices ordinance. Says Mr. Mintener concerning Mount Olivet: "There is an aura of effective Christianity coming out of that place. I don't know how they organize their own work, but I do know that they have a spirit of community service which makes that church a power for good in this city."

Mount Olivet's relations with the Minneapolis Church Federation are friendly and cooperative. The federation is carrying on a fairly strong program in behalf of the common interests of Protestantism in the city. Mount Olivet's financial support falls considerably below that of most other large churches in the city, although it took a well publicized offering for the federation one Sunday in December. The church's own heavy obligations help to explain that. It is a young church and for that reason has a more difficult task in educating its members to their wider obligations. It is also a Lutheran church, and its record in respect to interchurch cooperation in the city compares favorably with the best of that confessional group. When S. Paul Douglass studied Minneapolis Protestantism in 1944, he found many "sick" churches and others which were growing disproportionately. Less than half the people in the city belonged to a church. Dr. Douglass emphasized the necessity of cooperation among churches and said: "A very primary need of the Christian forces of Minneapolis is to see their enterprise steadily and to see it whole." In many ways Mount Olivet measures up to the standards defined in the Douglass report, but in this respect there is room for definite improvement.

VIII. Wider Community Relations

In its wider community relations, Olivet is bearing an effective witness. One of the city's outstanding figures, who is not a member of this church, pointed out that Minneapolis is a paradox. With its lakes and beautiful homes, it is one of the loveliest cities in America. But it also harbors a criminal element which for years was in the saddle and made it "the worst crime center in the United States." Dillinger used the twin cities as a base. Gangsters bought protection from the city hall, for "gambling is impossible without purchased protection." Then five years ago the church people of Minneapolis rose up and overturned the regime. They elected a new mayor, Hubert Humphrey, now senator, and Mayor Humphrey appointed an honest chief of police. For weeks the battle was touch and go. The lives of civic leaders were threatened and some of them were given body guards.

But they stood fast, and the church people backed them. In five months the vice element had been driven from the city and the rule of the mob broken. Since then Governor Youngdahl has got the legislature to outlaw slot machines.

On December 4, 1949, the Minnesota Poll showed that an overwhelming majority of the people still approve his policy. In all this fight the people of Mount Olivet stood side by side with other Protestant forces of civic decency and they do so today.

The representative of The Christian Century asked Governor Youngdahl what the churches are doing to sustain his program of humane and curative treatment of the mentally ill, of youth conservation and of protection of the people from the rapacity and corruption of organized gambling. He answered simply that they make possible everything he is trying to do. He is convinced that their support is stronger today than it has ever been. He declared that many pastors are praying in their church services for the governor of their state by name, and are openly telling their people that his program is practical Christianity. Mount Olivet, he said, is succeeding because "Rube" and his church put Christian principles to work, because they give laymen the initiative. He himself belongs to Messiah Lutheran, the family church, but he is proud of the fact that his younger brother leads a "laymen's church."

Churchmen, said the governor, head local committees working for the state's enlightened program for remedial treatment of the mentally ill. Many of the clergy are taking the initiative in the youth conservation program and the enforcement of the antigambling laws. Once some pastors joined with 4-H club members to boycott a county fair which featured a carnival outfit that was in league with criminal elements. He pointed out that Minneapolis' 13th ward, where Mount Olivet is located, is the only ward in the city which issues no 3.2 beer licenses. That came about by concerted action of the churches after they discovered that the two places selling the stuff were largely patronized by high school boys.

The governor is affectionately proud of his younger brother, and the feeling is reciprocated. Gideon Seymour, executive editor of the Minneapolis *Star* and *Tribune*, the morning and evening papers of the city, says of the Youngdahls: "Luther carries out as governor his faith as a Christian and Reuben as pastor carries his Christian convictions into civic life." The governor comes up for re-election in 1950, with the gambling and liquor interests solidly arrayed against him and with rifts, which now seem to be healing, in his party. He is staking his political future on the church people of Minnesota and is not ashamed either of his friends or of the enemies he has made. In the coming battle, an important influence will probably be exerted by the churches of Minneapolis. Their achievement, in cooperation with organized labor, in freeing their city from mob rule helped make possible a reform government in the state. The part Mount Olivet plays in that development will be worth watching.

IX. 'The Mount Olivet Spirit'—What Is It?

We hope this discussion of various aspects of the life of Mount Olivet Lutheran Church has made it clear why Protestant ministers in The Christian Century poll chose this Minneapolis church as one of the most successful large city congregations in America. But it has still not answered the question as to what makes greatness in a church. Can that question be answered?

It cannot be decided by any single one of the factors we have discussed. Other churches minister in an environment equally friendly. Others also are channels through which God is changing and redeeming human lives. Others have honest, deeply earnest, hard-working, believing pastoral leadership. Others are dedicated to persistent, intelligent evangelism; employ good methods in assembling and using the means for their continuing ministry; adapt their work to urban living. By almost every such standard Mount Olivet is an outstanding church, rising above most of its contemporaries, but it is not unique.

Yet Mount Olivet has one quality which, while again it is not unique, is an indispensable element of greatness. This quality is difficult to define, except by such a general term as "the spirit of Mount Olivet Church," which admittedly means little to the skeptical. But it means a great deal to the staff and members of this church and it means much to those who have personal acquaintance with it. So an attempt must be made to analyze this spirit, and made with the knowledge that it is foredoomed to at least partial failure.

In the first place, it is necessary to recognize that the "spirit" of a church embraces both a human and a divine factor. On the manward side, it expresses what has been called "the moral magic of leadership." In Mount Olivet, this "magic" is not a monopoly of Reuben K. Youngdahl, although it centers in and finds its fullest Mount Olivet expression in him. This minister has courage, devotion, confidence. He assumes responsibility, ventures beyond his strength. But these qualities of leadership do not make Mount Olivet people dependent upon him. The people too are courageous, devoted, confident. They accept responsibilities, do their part as members of the team, attempt the impossible and glory in its achievement. So to some degree, everybody in this church shares in the moral magic of leadership.

But what is it? Is it nothing more than collective exuberance, an American success story transferred to the field of religion, an ecclesiastical Rotarianism? Is it just what might be expected of youthful members of a youthful church in a youthful community? Is it merely another outcropping of that spirit which makes the New York Yankees a winning baseball team?

X. Christian Pioneers

It is impossible to deny that the attitude one finds in Mount Olivet has a certain kinship with the dauntless, resourceful vigor of the pioneering American spirit, with its glory in big achievement. But it goes beyond that, one soon discovers. When one of the most influential men of the church openly and in congregational meeting opposed beginning the present new building so soon after the 1939 building had been completed, and was voted down by a congregation which took the pastor's side of the issue, what did he do? He bowed to the will of the majority, accepted the chairmanship of the building committee and started the enterprise rolling by making a large contribution toward defraying the cost of the new building. Throughout the discussion of the sort of difference which sometimes makes lifelong enemies, he and the pastor, those who agreed with this layman that the time was not yet ripe to build again and those who backed the minister, main-

tained their relations as Christians. A difference of opinion over church policy, in other words, could not produce a rift in the Mount Olivet ranks.

Or take another attempt to get at the essential thing which makes this a great church—this time made by one of its members. A brilliant woman, formerly a member of another denomination and an accomplished musician, is pouring her life into Mount Olivet. "Here I find a spirit which dares to face life as it is," she says. "This church knows there is a hell and says so, and it knows the alternative to hell and proclaims it. At different times before coming here I was a member of four churches. Their breadth of intellectual interest appealed to me until I discovered that they had become so broad that they forgot the difference between right and wrong. They left me cold and I came to believe that they were spiritually dead and didn't know it. But here I find warm vitality, compelling love, faith that really saves. Why can't other churches be like this? Why can't God awaken them also?"

Or take the businessman whose life once was one long

lost week end but who is now a tower of strength in both church and community. "I cross half the continent," he says, "to get back here in time for Thanksgiving church service, and when I step inside the church, drop my bag and hang up my coat I say, 'I'm home.'"

That leads on beyond a merely human association to the element which helps men to transcend their own humanity, lifts them out of themselves. In Mount Olivet this appears in all sorts of places, but supremely in worship. Here more than ever one must speak from faith. The eye sees the vaulted ceilings and stained glass windows of the traditional Gothic, with a tall cross shining on the Lutheran altar. The ear hears the music of a well trained choir, the liturgical voice of Pastor Hillstrom, the responses of the congregation, the simple earnest sermon of Dr. Youngdahl. But beyond what the eye can see the believing spirit knows there is movement, power, forgiveness; beyond what the ear can hear there is deep calling unto deep. The voice of the Lord is sounding: Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? The people answer, Send me. And he says: Go!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

of this and other articles are found

on pages 85, 86, 87 and 88.

Use them in class discussions.

II. Evangelical and Reformed Church

New Knoxville, Ohio

RURAL AMERICA is predominantly Protestant. From colonial days until now, rural churches have nurtured a majority of the ministers and a considerable share of the people who later serve in or become members of town and city congregations. Equally vital is their contribution to country life. One of the greatest authorities on American agriculture, C. J. Galpin of the United States bureau of agricultural economics, says: "It is the small, weak, pastorless church, poorly located, which tends to surrender agriculture to destructive individualism. It is the strong church, with noble, permanent architecture, properly located, with a capable resident pastor, that unifies agriculture. A unified agriculture in turn unifies the church."

A rural church which is precisely pictured by the second sentence in Dr. Galpin's description is the First Evangelical and Reformed Church of New Knoxville, Ohio. It is a strong church of more than a thousand members. It has a noble, permanent house of worship. It is properly located in a village of around 800 souls. It has an able resident pastor in D. A. Bode, who is helped by the capable ministries of his wife. It constitutes a unifying and integrating force not only in agriculture but also in all other aspects of life within its parish, which reaches out into the country for miles in every direction. In turn it is itself strengthened by this strong community vitality.

At Center of New Knoxville

Nobody can visit New Knoxville and study this church, as The Christian Century did, without realizing that the ministers of America knew what they were doing when they nominated this as one of the great churches of America. This Evangelical and Reformed Church not only measures up to ordinary standards of Christian influence, rural or urban, but it transcends most of them in at least one respect. It has sent 42 persons into the Christian ministry! These men and women have gone out, largely in the past generation, into church and missionary service throughout the United States and to the uttermost parts of the earth. There they serve because of this church.

The community of which the New Knoxville church is the physical as well as the spiritual hub is one of the loveliest farm neighborhoods in America. Order and beauty speak of good rural housekeeping. When the motorist driving on Route 29 reaches a spot 100 miles northwest of Columbus, Ohio, and 60 miles

southeast of Fort Wayne, Indiana, he is suddenly startled by the resemblance of what he sees to the famous landscapes of Lancaster county, Pennsylvania. Even in these times of relative farm prosperity, the well-being of southern Auglaize county, Ohio, is noticeably higher than that of the surrounding territory.

Between level or slightly rolling fields stand clumps of neat farm buildings. Adequate houses and great barns are all painted. Tall timber seems to cover more of the land than in neighboring communities, but even that has a cultivated look. Fat livestock bears the marks of good care and breeding. Every farm has electricity. Good roads run between broad acres green with winter wheat. No empty houses or dreary expanses of weeds, no sagging fences or mounds of rusting junk mar the view.

Jail Long Tenantless

The center of this scene is the tall spire of the great brick church in New Knoxville. Its huge clock accurately tells the time and its chimes are heard downwind far out into the country. Around the church lies a village noted for spick-and-span order. Its broad, tree-lined streets look as if they were swept every day, and even the alleys are free from rubbish. Some New Knoxville houses are old and none are unusually large. But all are occupied, painted and in good repair. Styles of architecture indicate that the town has grown slowly over the past century, and a street of new homes shows that its growth is accelerating. The village has good schools, the usual number of filling stations and grocery stores and two restaurants. It has a bank, and a large cooperative grain elevator and farm machinery store. At the edge of town one sees the tall stacks of the largest sawmill in Ohio and a new processing plant for livestock feed. The brick town hall and fire station also houses a jail which has been empty so long that nobody can recall when it held a lawbreaker.

New Knoxville is one of the 20,000 villages of less than 2,500 population which dot the American landscape. Along their shaded streets, they house something like 14 million men, women and children. These villages are not

disappearing, as it was predicted a generation ago they would. Instead, smaller places are increasing in both numbers and population. Today they seem likely to stand as a permanent feature of the over-all pattern of settlement of the New World. They stand because they play an indispensable role in the reli-

gious, cultural and economic life of rural people, and hence in the life of the nation. This is the fundamental reason why the total number of small incorporated towns has doubled in the last 50 years. It indicates why every American ought to be interested in learning how one village church is successfully meeting its great responsibilities.

Church Parking a Problem

Parking problems raise no blood pressures at New Knoxville, except on Sunday. Then you will encounter difficulty, as The Christian Century did, in finding a place for your car within some distance of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Even though that institution has recently opened its own block-long parking lot, which is filled to capacity, cars line the curbs in every direction.

Once inside the church, you will have as much difficulty in locating a seat, if you come late, as you did in parking your car. So you tour the building to see the Sunday school in operation. From the basement, where an adult class of more than a hundred is in session, to the second floor, every room, every corner and cranny is filled with groups of young and old studying the lesson of the day. In the Akron-style church auditorium, the teachers of ten classes of adults compete for attention in a happy if unpedagogical din. Immediately above, several classes of young people are scattered through the horseshoe-shaped balcony.

Average attendance at the Sunday school is nearly 700, the enrollment being 980. Almost everybody stays for church. Then the Sunday school rooms are opened to expand the large sanctuary, and few seats are vacant. When the new pipe organ starts playing the opening hymn, entire families from children to grandparents join in the singing. A remarkable community at worship sings the great hymns of the church with the help of senior and young people's choirs.

How remarkable this church is can be seen when one discovers that its 1,050 confirmed and 315 baptized members constitute a total almost twice the population of the village, which also has a Methodist church of 140 members. The Evangelical and Reformed Church owns, debt-free, property which could hardly be replaced for \$250,000, and it is hoping to build an additional educational structure. During the past nine years, since Dr. Bode has been its minister, it has contributed to missions and benevolences over \$100,000. But its greatest source of pride and its highest claim to distinction are those 39 men and 3 women it has sent into the Christian ministry and its 30 daughters who have married ministers or missionaries. If that record has been equaled or exceeded, the fact deserves publication.

No Rural Decline Here

How has this village church managed not only to keep alive but also to grow in spiritual power and numbers? Studies made by Edmund de S. Brunner showed that between 1930 and 1936 there was a net decrease of 3.4 per cent in the number of rural churches in America. The 1936 census of religious bodies, inadequate as it was, showed that the rural churches of 11 of the major denominations, including the Roman Catholic, had declined since 1926 in numbers, in total membership and in Sunday school attendance. But this mortality occurred among the little churches, which went down, adding to the economic

burdens and the social conflicts of the people. Churches of 200 or more members not only survived—they thrived. The New Knoxville church is one of those which had an adequate base in the community, and so it lives and grows.

This does not mean that the farmers of Washington township, in which the village is located, are immune to the technological trends which have brought such changes elsewhere. It does not mean that their young men and women all remain at home, or that the people have insulated themselves against a shifting world by hostility to education or peculiarities of dress. They send their children through high school and most of the recent graduating classes have gone on to college or some other form of advanced training. Farms employ the latest devices, from gleaming up-to-date kitchens to tractors, cornhusking and hay-baling machines costing thousands of dollars. The people in the great Sunday congregations, morning and evening, in the Wednesday prayer meetings and the Saturday morning confirmation classes, wear the same kind of clothing seen in any city congregation, and with as much grace. Youngsters belong to 4-H and Future Farmers clubs, play on athletic teams, hold scout meetings. Their parents belong to the Farm Bureau, to livestock and dairying associations. Youngsters and adults place exhibits in state and national farm and livestock shows. Midweek meetings of community organizations are as numerous as in the cities.

The New Knoxville Evangelical and Reformed Church is very much alive. But life is not a simple or easily understood thing. No one factor can be isolated of which one must say: This is it! Even when outstanding characteristics are put together and described, the living entity flows through the net of words as the clear waters of the creeks of Washington township pass through a little boy's cheese-cloth seine. But after a visit of several days in this community, after a study of its history, its beliefs and its hopes, three elements stand out as distinctively contributing to the vitality of this great church. By proceeding from the obvious but more important factors, perhaps we can learn why the ministers of Protestant America nominated this as one of twelve churches deserving of study.

Rooted in the Good Earth

A century before scientific analysis of the soil was developed, the farmers who organized this church anticipated some of its findings by clearing, draining and starting to till the good soil around New Knoxville. Today their descendants can tell you that the light brown earth on the slopes is Crosby soil, which is productive but heavy, so that it must be artificially drained. In some places it requires, and gets, contour cultivation and terracing. They point out level or depressed areas, which were formerly dotted with ponds, and say this is the black Brookston soil. This is even more productive, but it must be tiled, and crossed with diversion ditches and an occasional grassed waterway. To maintain their fertility, both kinds of land require that crops be rotated on a four-year cycle—two years in clover, alfalfa or timothy and the other two years in corn, oats, wheat or soybeans.

So the New Knoxville church is literally rooted in the soil. The farmers cultivate our most important natural resource, the good earth, and have increased its fertility. Here the advent of machinery has not increased the area of

The Evangelical and Reformed Church, New Knoxville, Ohio, was chosen in The Christian Century's poll of 100,000 ministers as the rural church most worthy of study in the states of Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, New York and the six states of New England. Other rural churches frequently voted for in this northeast quarter of the country were St. Lorenz Lutheran, Frankenmuth, Michigan; Methodist, Canal Lewisville, Ohio; Bethel Evangelical and Reformed, Freelandville, Indiana; First Baptist, Greece, New York; and Presbyterian, Oswego, Illinois.

farms, which still contain an average of 100 acres. These family-size holdings maintain their owners at a good level of living through diversified agriculture, dairying and livestock production. Few farms are rented and seldom is one sold. When owners can work no longer, they pass their land on to their children and move to the village. Many of the names found on the original deeds, drawn up a century ago when the government sold the land for 50 cents an acre, are to be seen on the mailboxes standing beside the road today, when the land cannot be bought for \$200 an acre.

Economic and Ethical Integrity

Less than 25 per cent of the farms are mortgaged and foreclosures are almost unheard-of. The local banker says he would starve if he had to depend upon farm loans. In its 40 years of history, his bank has foreclosed on only one farm mortgage and has had "less than \$2,500 in bad debts." The one foreclosure came about during the depression when a discouraged farmer simply gave up trying to pay a small debt which he could have managed with a little more persistence. The largest local business, the Hoge sawmill, says that its credit losses over 30 years have been "less than one-fourth of one per cent." Washington is the only township in the county whose land never appears in the published lists of tax delinquencies. Even during the depression of the thirties, only three or four people received public relief.

Facts like these underline not only the economic stability but the ethical integrity of the people of the New Knoxville church, who make up a large proportion of the people of the community. In addition to owning his family-size farm, the average farmer is estimated to have \$5,000 to \$8,000 worth of livestock and upwards of \$10,000 invested in machinery. That he and his neighbors in the village are frugal is indicated by the fact that as of December 31, 1949, the People's Savings Bank of New Knoxville had \$1,262,408 on deposit, according to its public report. In commenting on the economic stability of this community a businessman said to *The Christian Century*: "When depression gets this community down with its tongue hanging out, there will be nobody left in places like Chicago."

One Church—One People

Recently the New Knoxville church voted to send Dr. Bode and his wife to Ladbergen, Germany, to represent them next June 3 and 4 at the one-thousandth anniversary of the founding of this Westphalian church. They did this because the ancestors of a considerable proportion of the New Knoxville people came from that place. Emigration from Germany started in the 1830's and was largely completed in the generation following. The founding of New Knoxville was a small part of the contribution to the making of America given by the million and a half German immigrants who came between 1830 and 1860 and settled in the middle west. Carl C. Taylor of the U. S. department of agriculture says of them: "For the most part they were educated, thrifty, hard-working farmers who had left their mother country to seek political freedom and economic opportunity. They probably contributed more than any other group to the development of a stable agriculture in the new areas."

Many of the New Knoxville people still maintain contact with their relatives overseas. Since the war they have sent more than 400 parcels of food and clothing to Ladbergen, where these gifts were distributed by the pastor. Until the late war, when over 100 young men left the New Knoxville church to enter the armed forces of the United States, the German language was used in church services. Now its use is confined to a Sunday morning Bible class, taught by the minister. The prize possession of this class is the German Bible sent to them by the Ladbergen church in 1938 when New Knoxville celebrated its centenary. But German speech is still often heard when New Knoxville people meet, and the bond of common origin and culture is a very important element in their communal life.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the Evangelical and Reformed Church does more than any other community institution to preserve and build upon this heritage. One often hears references to its first minister, F. H. W. Kuckhermann, who came as a young man from Ladbergen. First he worked for 25 cents a day helping dig the Miami and Erie canal, which runs a few miles to the west of New Knoxville. Then he became a schoolmaster. But the little log church needed a minister, and so the schoolmaster was ordained. From 1844 to 1890 he served as pastor of the slowly growing congregation. He lived on in the community until 1915, and his grandchildren and great-grandchildren are there today. Early in the ministry of his successor the main part of the present church, including the tower, was built. The church has been added to at various times since, but its original stately architecture remains.

Religion the Vital Factor

Names of the charter members of the church are still borne by many present pillars of the congregation. They include such unmistakably German designations as Fledderjohann, Lutterbek, Lammers, Kuck, Huedepol, Meckstroth, Hoge, Holtkamp, Kaetterheinrich, Wierwille, Nuessmeier, Schroerlucke, Schroer, Kattmann, Niemeier, Elshoff and Finke. A common biological heritage therefore adds to community stability. More important still is the persistence of common traits, attitudes and folkways. The kind of husbandry one sees here, the courtesy people exhibit in their dealings with each other, their diligence in work and in study, are a part of this heritage.

Stronger still is the relationship of this endowment to religion. New Knoxville parents expect to be held morally responsible for the religious nurture of their children. It is a part of their strong sense of rightness that their children should be baptized in infancy and confirmed at the beginning of adolescence. Families are brought up to hear the reading of the Bible in family worship, to have the pastor come when they are sick or in sorrow, to gather around when he reads the Bible and prays, to go to church in a body on Sunday. These people hold the Christian ministry in high esteem and expect others to do so.

Today more newcomers than formerly are moving into New Knoxville. They find work in the lumber mill, which prepares wood for industrial uses as well as for buildings, in service jobs or in industries in near-by towns. They soon learn that their neighbors expect them to join a church, to pay their debts, to work hard and to take good care of their own. If they meet community standards, they are

accepted into its fellowship. If they fail, they probably come to resent what must seem a clannish resistance to the outsider. But this insistence on certain standards is the means by which the community has conserved over more than a century much that has had value in a thousand years of Christian culture. It seeks almost instinctively to protect this heritage now. Much depends on whether it is able to convince erstwhile strangers of the rightness and importance of what it is trying to do.

Influence of Ministerial Sons

More significant to the New Knoxville church than its economic, ethnic or cultural stability is its Christian faith. This faith opens the way by which spiritual power is added to stability. The New Knoxville church holds and propagates its faith with zeal, conviction and diligence. Those 72 ministers, missionaries and wives of the manse who have gone out from its membership were sent as well as called! Dr. Bode says that if he should neglect for only a few weeks to mention in his public prayers or in his sermons the claims of Christian service and the necessity of supporting those who have entered it, a member of the board of elders would be sure to remind him of his duty.

There is hardly a family in the community that has not freely contributed one or more members to the Christian ministry. Nearly everybody has a son, brother, uncle, daughter, sister, aunt or cousin in church service. Each of the sons of the church, before he finishes high school, finds himself under silent but unrelenting pressure to give serious consideration to the claims of Christian vocation upon his life. Those who have gone out from the community into church work write and many of them return periodically to the old home. Accordingly their problems, hopes and achievements enter into discussions at New Knoxville dinner tables, in grocery stores and filling stations.

Colony of Heaven

Everybody treasures the story of Herman H. Cook, whose aged mother still lives in New Knoxville and always urges those who call on her to "pray for Japan." Her son died in that country in 1916, after fourteen years of incredibly hard work as a Christian missionary. Rev. and Mrs. Gilbert Schroer also served in Japan for many years, and Richard Lammers is teaching in North Japan College now. According to the anniversary record published by the church in 1938, the first minister to volunteer from the church was graduated from Heidelberg College in 1875. One other graduated before the century was finished, eight more in the first decade of the 20th century, seven in the second decade, 12 in the third and 13 since 1930. Six are now in theological seminary. Most of them have gone to Mission House Theological Seminary at Franklin, near Sheboygan, Wisconsin, an institution which formerly belonged to the Reformed branch of what is now the Evangelical and Reformed Church. A former New Knoxville pastor, Dr. Josias Friedli, is now acting president. When they complete their studies, most of the New Knoxville young men are ordained in their home church, whose pastor graduated from Mission House in 1912.

The close identification of the church and its people with so many who have gone so far and done so much for Christ and the church has had a profound effect on both.

One visitor who had many opportunities to glimpse this effect was deeply intrigued by it. How could it be defined? It is affectionate pride in and tender concern for individuals, but it is more. It is spiritual oneness with their work and it is sharing in their ministry through support of and loyalty to the church, but it is more. It is a missionary spirit and it is an evangelical commitment, but it is more. It is something organic, something the people are as well as something they think and do. Well, what are they? A phrase in Moffatt's translation of Philippians 3:20 seems to fit better than any other that comes to mind. This church is "a colony of heaven."

Not all the New Knoxville people are saints, any more than were the Philippians to whom Paul wrote. But their dedication of life as well as of means to Christian faith and service has left its distinctive stamp upon them and their children. A visit to the three Saturday morning confirmation classes revealed that. Children begin these classes at eleven and finish the course at thirteen. On a dismal, raw morning in January, the attendance was 48 out of an enrollment of 51. The only thing that was exceptional about that was that three was regarded as a high number of absentees.

What Does the Church Teach?

The doctrinal basis of the preaching and other religious instruction in this church is the Heidelberg Catechism, which was first published in 1563. After the Elector Palatine adopted Protestantism, it was drawn up by Ursinus and Olevianus on orders from Frederick III. It defined the belief of the German Reformed (Calvinistic) Church and was adopted by most of the Reformed churches of the Continent. To the German ancestors of the present residents of New Knoxville and vicinity the catechism constituted a bond with the church they had left behind and a guide in the complexities of life in the New World. Their progeny, who now people a town named after a descendant of John Knox, have no desire to change it.

So they teach their children that man's redemption from his sinful human nature must be accomplished through regeneration by the work of the Spirit of God. The free gift of God's grace is given to those elected to receive it. Unmerited by them, it cannot be won by good works, which are however the fruit of grace. Their faith may be summarized by the first question and answer which the confirmation classes at New Knoxville learn:

What is thy only comfort in life and in death? That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, who with his precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and redeemed me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me, that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must work together for my salvation. Wherefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready henceforth to live under him.

This catechetical instruction culminates in an annual reunion of all confirmation classes on Palm Sunday evening when one of the ministerial sons of the congregation preaches.

On the January Sunday when *The Christian Century* visited New Knoxville, Dr. Bode preached on "The Common Faith," taking his text from Titus 1:4. He then or-

dained new elders and deacons and installed a new trustee. These officers had been elected by the members under the presbyterian system of church government. Dr. Bode outlined the duties of the officers as defined by the common faith found in the New Testament. The elders look after the spiritual life of the congregation, the deacons see to its material responsibilities and the trustees care for its properties. The pastor declared that the common faith (1) teaches us the sinfulness of man and (2) the love of God, who (3) "wills that all men be saved" body and soul through faith in Jesus Christ, which salvation leads to (4) works of kindness, hospitality and zeal in service of the church and community and eventually to (5) eternal life.

During the morning sermon Dr. Bode commended the businessmen of the community for a new effort they are making to form an association for common endeavor and denounced a proposal to open the next county fair with a Sunday show of "daredevils." He spoke approvingly of the sacrifices parents make to educate their children and urged all men of the consistory to read the *Messenger*, the E. and R. church paper which comes to the New Knoxville post office in numbers almost equal to the *Ohio Farmer*. At the evening service the pastor preached on "Saved to Serve," illustrating the theme from the life of Herman Cook. He said that Cook's sacrifice had done much to create the deep interest in missions and in Christian service which is characteristic of the church, as demonstrated by the fact that it now has six students in the seminaries. Maintain this faith, he urged, so that this church, like Ladbergen, will keep going for a thousand years.

All Offerings for Others

That the people of New Knoxville intend to keep the faith and to extend it is seen by the fact that last year their church and its organizations raised a little over \$38,500, spending about half to keep their church going and the rest for others. Since farm income is irregular, the church does not use the familiar envelope system. People make their pledges when visited in an every-member canvass, then pay them as they can at the hardware store, whose proprietor is church treasurer. All money collected in church offerings goes to benevolences. Each year on the first Sunday in September a "Harvest Home and Mission Festival" results in substantial help for the far-flung work of the church.

The church pays salaries to minister, janitor, organist, choir director, to three teachers and to the treasurers of current and benevolent funds. The pastor has no assistant except his able but unsalaried wife. The church houses the minister in a comfortable brick manse and pays \$500 a year toward his automobile expense. The central organization of the Evangelical and Reformed Church has recently written church consistories urging them to consider raising pastors' salaries. If New Knoxville is typical in this respect, the point was well taken. This is strictly the opinion of The Christian Century, for Dr. Bode does not complain.

The human problems of New Knoxville people are the same as those of people everywhere, and they are met by the wise pastoral ministry of Dr. Bode and his wife. In their nine years in the manse near the church, they have come to love the men, women and children of the entire community and to be loved and trusted by them. Their own six

children have grown up, been sent through college, and are on their own. Mrs. Bode plays an active part in the women's guild, the ladies' aid and the women's missionary society. A poet who has published three small volumes of warmly human verse, she is in demand as a speaker for women's, church and community meetings, the latter sponsored by the Ohio Farm Bureau. Dr. Bode calls on the sick and the shut-ins and helps shoulder the burdens of the heavy-laden.

Help When Most Needed

The pastor attends farm sales and never fails to show up if fire or other disaster strikes, such as the growing number of injuries from farm machinery. (Last year farm accidents cost people of this county \$9,270 in doctor bills and 5,715 days' work.) He is one of the cheering fans at basketball and other athletic contests, and makes it a point to go to the dressing room to cheer up his boys if they lose. He was one of the leaders in getting the town to open a multiple-purpose athletic field, equipped with good facilities, including night lighting. People know that they can call him at any time of day or night if he is needed. He pays special attention to the very young and the old. The high proportion of aged in the community was shown last Mother's Day when the church, which gives each person over 70 a flowering plant as a token of love, distributed 117 plants.

Dr. Bode sadly recalls that he was unable to save three wartime marriages, which ended in divorce, but sets over against this failure 19 instances in which, during those troubled years, he helped preserve distracted families from disintegration. In a community which takes pride in caring for its own, he is generally the one who brings together helpers and those who need a little timely assistance. His experience as superintendent of the Ottilie Orphan's Home in Jamaica, New York city, has given him a fund of sympathy with the young and their parents which often is put to good use. His predecessor, O. B. Moor, helped to effect the transfer of a library which the church had accumulated to the local high school, where it is much more widely used, and Dr. Bode serves as a member of the library board. His command of German is often put to good use, particularly in his ministry to the elderly.

New Knoxville's Problems

One matter which concerns the leadership of the New Knoxville church is rather surprising for a village so solidly Protestant that it has only a very few Roman Catholic families. It is the zeal with which the Roman Catholic Church is working in this as well as in other rural communities, seeking to expand its influence by gaining converts from Protestant churches. Its most effective means of reaching New Knoxville people is through pamphlets, leaflets and newspaper articles. The minister is concerned over what seems to be a persistent attempt to infiltrate his community with ideas which are alien to its whole history, and with the problems which arise when church young people marry non-Protestants. One means of dealing with this situation is the Reformation Festival on the last Sunday in October, which is a date of great importance here.

Another problem arises from differences which develop between people over changing forms of economic enter-

prise. Half of the 2,200 farmers in the county are members of the Farm Bureau, which is developing cooperatives, one being located in New Knoxville. Some farmers and many businessmen view cooperatives as a threat to private enterprise and claim that their tax-exempt status constitutes unfair competition. But others insist that cooperatives pay their way, that farmers or consumers have a right to go into business for themselves if they desire, that cooperation is fully as Christian as competition. And they point out that they need this protection in a time when increased prices secured for their products are more than offset by rising costs, for which they blame retailers in one breath and organized labor in the next. The tension created by this situation exists among the people of New Knoxville. That it is not a problem in the church, where partisans of both points of view meet as Christians, is a tribute to the high quality of Christian fellowship which exists there.

Growth—Toward What?

A third problem is posed by the fact that New Knoxville is probably changing more rapidly today than it has at any time in its history. To a church which feels responsible for the character of society, the direction of that change becomes a vitally important issue. The lumber mill alone employs 65 workers and has a payroll of \$160,000 a year. The new feed mill plans soon to increase its staff. So industrialization is beginning to invade the village at the same time that it is advancing on the farms themselves. Whether the community is aware of the nature of all the problems this will pose is open to doubt.

But these problems will have to be faced, sooner or later. And they cannot be faced by an economic leadership which thinks solely in secular terms or a church leadership which fails to take fully into account its responsibility for community character. An important aspect of this issue concerns landownership. So far the few people who have sold farms have transferred them to persons who could be at home in this community. What will happen when others are offered high prices for their farms by persons who have no intention of conforming to the community's traditional standards remains to be seen. This is one of the situations which cannot easily be met by the independence and individualism which are characteristic of rural people and their churches and communities. It emphasizes a problem which must be met as the church faces the future. It can be dealt with only by the development of new forms of cooperative action within the church

and community and between them and other communities.

Good Churchmen Are Good Neighbors

Relations between the Evangelical and Reformed and the Methodist churches in New Knoxville are wholesome and cooperative. Last summer when the Methodist church was without a minister for a while, Dr. Bode helped the church and its members in many ways. Now that a young pastor has come, the two and their churches work together in joint meetings and other enterprises. But the town suffers somewhat from isolation. There is no functioning county association of Protestant ministers, although pastors of different groups get together occasionally in denominational meetings. The Ohio state pastors' conference and the state council of churches mean a good deal to the ministers, but effective interchurch cooperation between New Knoxville churches and their immediate church neighbors in the area around the community is almost nonexistent. This is a great pity, for this church has a great deal to give as well as much to gain. The walls that have sheltered it in the past have been moved back and it is a part, whether willingly or not, of a larger community.

The New Knoxville congregation was not enthusiastic about the proposal that its denomination merge with the Congregational Christian Churches to form the United Church of Christ. If the merger is accomplished, however, the congregation will not oppose it but will seek faithfully to continue to serve Jesus Christ, the head of the church. Here the innate conservatism of rural people manifests itself. This congregation has slowly accommodated its thinking to the 15-year-old merger of the Evangelical and Reformed churches, and it cannot easily assimilate the idea of another change so soon. Such things take time, even where good will is strong, as it is here. Underneath all its surface changes, rural life is still geared to the deliberate cycle of the generations, to the slow evolution of a deeply rooted way of life.

But its strength and solidity, its virtues and its power, are nowhere better illustrated than in the New Knoxville Evangelical and Reformed Church. In a dark age when all the proud centers of urban civilization are threatened with sudden atomic death, this church and this community are a lighthouse throwing a steady beam of hope through the gathering gloom. Here the Light of the World shines out from a communal fellowship built on an unshakable foundation. It will continue to shine, as the New Knoxville citizen declared, even if a time comes when nobody is left in cities like Chicago.

III. The First Church of Christ (Congregational) West Hartford, Connecticut

SUBURBIA presents American Protestantism today with what may be its greatest opportunity. Suburbia also poses its most baffling problem. The residents of Suburbia are, by and large, Protestant in tradition and by natural addiction. They want to have Protestant churches in their communities and will support them generously. They send their children to Protestant church schools, and more often than not they maintain a church membership for themselves. But in too many instances Suburbia breeds a sense of self-satisfaction, of complacency, on occasion even of self-congratulation, which tends to look on the church as little more than a social convenience. Suburbia is the home of those who have arrived.

Simeon Stylites painted the picture of many a suburban congregation in a few deft strokes when he hailed "The Blood of the Martyrs" in these pages not long ago. Those heroic souls extolled by Simeon—Polycarp Brown, "who came to the morning service once every three months, on fine Sundays"; Demos Duval, "who attended two men's club dinners and even played end man in the minstrel show"; Mrs. Boanerges Johnson, "who drove her children seven blocks to Sunday school, called for them at 11 a.m. and drove them home again"—were Suburbia Protestants instantly recognized by anyone familiar with American church life. Many a baffled parson has found in Suburbia's congregations the modern equivalent of the Laodicean church described in such condemnatory terms in the closing book of the Bible.

Trend to the Suburbs

Yet Suburbia exerts a gravitational pull on American Protestantism which is not to be denied. Take almost any American city, and the trend among the "strong" Protestant churches is almost uniformly toward the suburbs. Strong, that is, in terms of membership statistics, real-estate holdings and annual budgets. But are such suburban churches and ministries strong in terms of spiritual influence? Are the suburbs themselves strong in their influence on American life? Or are they parasite communities whose inhabitants are trying to buy their escape from the hurly-burly of the American social and political struggle at the price of a somewhat costlier standard of living? And are their churches more than chaplaincies to such a parasitic existence? Any thoughtful American Christian concerned for the future of Protestantism in this

nation must have entertained similar doubts when looking on the well trimmed lawns and sleek architectural lines of St. Vitus'-in-the-Vale.

Among the twelve churches selected for study in The Christian Century's poll of ministers, the one which best represents the effort of Protestantism to serve the spiritual needs of a suburban community is the First Church of Christ (Congregational) in West Hartford, Connecticut. Here, standing beside the "green" in what was for two centuries a quiet New England crossroads village, but now has suddenly become a bustling suburban city a fourth as large as the adjoining state capital, is a historic church striving to make its ministry measure up to the requirements of a new day. The West Hartford church would be the last to claim that it has solved the spiritual problems of Suburbia. But it is making a valiant and intelligent effort to do so. It is, in the argot of the playing field, "in there trying" every day of the week.

An 18th Century Church in the 20th Century

Unlike most suburban churches, the Congregational church in West Hartford has a history that goes a long way back. All the way back, in fact, to the year 1710, when 28 citizens of the colony of Connecticut petitioned the General Assembly: "Your petitioners, being by the providence of God settled something remote from the town of Hartford, do desire the liberty to call or settle, as we may see meet, a minister amongst us to carry on the public worship of God." In support of their request these pioneers told of the length of the journey imposed on them by the obligations of churchgoing in Hartford, the badness of the roads, the thickness and dangers of the intervening forests, and their desire "that our small children may be present at the public worship of God and not be brought up in darkness in such a land of light as this is, but may be instructed in the doctrine of the gospel."

In view of that concluding argument, there seems to be more than ordinary historical appropriateness in the strong emphasis which the West Hartford church today places on its program of religious education.

The First Church of Christ (Congregational) of West Hartford, Connecticut, was chosen in The Christian Century's poll of 100,000 ministers as the church in a medium-sized community most worthy of study in the states of Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, New York and the six states of New England. Other churches in cities and towns in this northeast quarter of the country having between 5,000 and 100,000 population which were frequently voted for in this poll were the First Methodist, Evanston, Illinois; First Methodist, Anderson, Indiana; Church of the Brethren, Hagerstown, Maryland; First Congregational, Madison, Wisconsin; Trinity Lutheran, St. Joseph, Michigan; and First Reformed, Holland, Michigan.

Opposition from the older Hartford churches met the petition, but the General Assembly finally voted its approval—those were the days when Connecticut had an established church—and in 1713 the West Hartford congregation, consisting of "17 males and 12 females," was

organized. It has grown from that start 237 years ago to its present membership of 1,990. Over that span of years it has worshiped in five meetinghouses, has been served by 14 ministers (one pastorate lasted 66 years; four covered 171 years!), and has been supported, successively, by taxes, assessments against pew owners, pew rents and voluntary giving. In 1774, when a Hartford suburbanite belonged to the West Hartford church not because it was "the thing to do" but because if he didn't he could not vote or hold public office, the church committee, after assigning seats to the families in the community, set aside certain pews for "widow women, old maids and colored servants."

In other words, the church has a past much like that of dozens more of New England's older congregations. But that scarcely prepared it for its modern career. West Hartford had begun to take on its present character as the favored suburb of Hartford's professional people, its younger executives and its rising business leaders in the years after the First World War. It continued to grow at the rate of about one house a day throughout the depression, since Hartford's insurance companies, which draw their income from all over the nation, felt that cataclysm much less than most other lines of business. But it took the Second World War, which settled on Hartford as one of its booming production centers, to transform the town of West Hartford from its traditional village existence to what it is today—a suburban city of 43,000 with all the apparatus and appurtenances of an economically privileged community.

Not a Millionaire Community

Members of the West Hartford church, when they are trying to describe its activities, can be counted on to impress an inquiring stranger with the fact that there are no very wealthy people in the congregation. West Hartford is not a community of millionaires. It is a community of separate homes, with modest lawns around them, a garage behind every house usually holding one car, occasionally two. The shopping center contains glistening stores and a few "shoppes," with the town hall, the library and the impressive high school building spread along the green beyond the Congregational church. Outside the town hall there is a massive stone statue of West Hartford's most famous son, Noah Webster. There are nine other churches and the Jewish temple, but only one of them is also "on the green." During the day the town is largely denuded of men, but pulsing with housewives driving small children to and from school, marketing or hurrying to a meeting of the women's club. A banker estimated the town's median income at about \$7,000. Its homes look as though they cost from around \$10,000 to \$25,000. There are a few apartment houses. In brief, Suburbia.

If West Hartford underwent a metamorphosis with the Second World War, so did its Congregational church. Three weeks after Pearl Harbor a fire destroyed the church building, and left a congregation of 1,300 without a home. Fortunately, a parish house for the church school had just been completed and was undamaged by the fire, so that this vital part of the church's program could go ahead without interruption. But what was the church to do at a time when war priorities made rebuilding impossible? As it turned out, the fire opened the way to one of the most

uplifting spiritual experiences which could befall a congregation. For the neighboring Jewish temple stepped forward to offer its facilities, and for almost two years Christian worship rose in the Jewish sanctuary, with the host congregation refusing to permit its guests to make the slightest financial return for the hospitality so unstintedly offered. When a stranger enters the West Hartford church today, almost the first thing his eye is likely to light on is a bronze tablet in the narthex:

This Tablet

fashioned of enduring metal symbolizes
and bespeaks undying gratitude to the
congregation of

TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL

for generously providing a house of
worship to the

FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST (CONGREGATIONAL)

West Hartford, Connecticut, for
twenty-two months
following the fire which destroyed
the meeting-house, Jan. 3, 1942

In a day sadly clouded by
inhuman prejudice we experienced
in the fellowship of
Jew and Christian
the joy of true religion

For the adventure of these many Sundays
in the temple, the concord they evinced,
and the friendship they fostered, we here
reveal our thankful hearts

There is a duplicate of this tablet in Temple Beth Israel. The two do more than remind West Hartford of an important event in its history; they help to bar the way to any growth of that racial snobbishness which blights many a privileged suburban community. Said a West Hartford Congregationalist who passed through that experience of worshiping in the synagogue, "I never go by the temple any more without thinking, 'The eternal light is still burning in that sanctuary.'" It will be a long while before West Hartford forgets the days when it had "a Congregational church with a Quaker pastor worshiping in a Jewish temple while using Methodist hymnals under the leadership of a Negro tenor."

But this is not to be a history of the West Hartford church. This is to be an effort to describe what it is doing today to provide an effective Christian ministry in a certain type of American town. So let's get on with the story.

Quaker in a Congregational Pulpit

Members of the West Hartford church, when asked about its transformation from an undistinguished congregation following traditional suburban patterns, often date the change from the fire of 1942. It would be nearer the truth to date it from the coming of Elden H. Mills as minister 13 years ago. The congregation, numbering then about 1,150, had split right down the middle over the issue of a new church, and whether the church, if built,

should be Gothic in design or colonial. The debate became so bitter that the building project was abandoned, and the pastor resigned. There was no rush of candidates for the vacancy. West Hartford looked too much like a graveyard for any ministerial career.

With the pastorless church drifting rapidly toward the rocks, two members of the faculty of Hartford Theological Seminary who worshiped in West Hartford bethought themselves of a Quaker who had made a fine scholastic record at the seminary a few years before, and since then had been serving in the Friends ministry. He had recently closed a pastorate at the First Friends Church in Indianapolis, and had taken the pulpit of a Presbyterian church in Forest Hills, the tennis town on Long Island, to support himself while doing postgraduate work at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Thus it happened that a New England Congregational church more than 200 years old called to its pastorate an Indiana Quaker, who remains to this day as breezy and informal a Hoosier as he is devoted in his adherence to Quaker doctrine.

New England Cross-Fertilization

To those who know New England, this appearance of a midwestern Quaker in a Connecticut Congregational pulpit will hardly seem extraordinary. New England Protestantism long ago stopped breeding its own clerical leadership. It is unusual to find a native New Englander in a New England pulpit. If it were not for the many theological seminaries that draw young men from the rest of the country, and induce some of them to stay, one wonders how the New England churches would keep going. In the denominations usually regarded as peculiarly a part of New England culture—Congregational, Unitarian, Universalist—most of the clergy seem to have been recruited not only from other parts of the nation but from other communions. One easily forms the habit, when meeting a New England Congregational minister, of asking, "What denomination did you come from?"

Elden Mills is therefore a product of a process of cross-fertilization which is going on within New England Protestantism all the time. "Don't come here with any big ideas," one of the West Hartford deacons warned him while he was considering the call. "If you're thinking of trying to develop a great program here, stay in New York!" Which was precisely the kind of warning most likely to challenge a man of the Mills type. Maybe the deacon knew it.

"I would never have believed," one of the long-time members of the church told *The Christian Century*, "that anyone could have pulled this quarreling, faction-ridden congregation together as Elden Mills did. But he did, and he did it within a matter of weeks. It was amazing."

"How did he do it?"

"How? Well, partly by his preaching. I remember that after I had told him how much I had been helped by one of his first sermons he said, 'I am not a great preacher, but I hope never to preach a sermon that does not leave something with the members of the congregation they will continue to think about.' He always did, and it was always something that had to do with what it meant to be a Christian in their own ways of living. But beyond that, however, I think he healed the wounds in this church by

not trying to do it, but by just being himself in every church meeting and with every church member."

A Quaker Whirlwind

Elden Mills is very much himself, right down to the present. He is an informal whirlwind in a community accustomed to New England formality. From the time when his hatless fullback hulk breezes into the church office at half-past eight in the morning until he parks his car in his home garage and drops dog-tired into bed, generally around midnight, he is hard at work. To a January visitor he confided that he had spent just three evenings at home since October. During five days at the church this visitor heard no one, save other strangers and the children in the church school, call him anything but "Elden."

The Quaker in this pastor comes out in many ways. There is, for example, the five minutes of silent meditation in the midst of the Sunday service. Many testify that it is for them one of the most rewarding portions of the service. When the pastor omits it, as he does occasionally, there are sure to be protests, especially from members of the high school choir. But there is nothing sacrosanct about an order of worship to this Quaker. No one can be sure in advance from week to week whether Elden Mills or his associate, Donald H. Finley, will preach or will pray or will read the Scriptures. No one can be sure that the order of service as printed in the bulletin will be the order observed. If the pastor thinks more effectiveness can be secured by last-minute changes, he'll make them. On the Sunday this paper was represented in the congregation, the responsive reading from the Psalms and the closing hymn were both changed.

At the dedication of the spacious colonial meetinghouse which replaced the church destroyed by fire, Elden Mills preached on "The Peril of Privilege." On the Sunday a few weeks ago when *The Christian Century's* observer was in the congregation he preached on the rich young ruler and Peter's plaintive query: "Lord, we have left all . . . now what do we get out of it?" That should give an idea of the terms in which the gospel is presented to this comfortable community. The congregation has learned to take its New Testament in strong doses. It seldom shows any signs of rebellion. During the war, when the pastor's pacifism was never concealed or apologized for, he received just one letter impugning his patriotism. There has been, says Mills, only one serious row in the church since he came. That was over the shape of the ends of the pews in the new meetinghouse! It was settled in Quaker fashion, by discussing it until there was a congregational consensus. Oh yes, one family withdrew because those married more than ten years were kept out of a young married couples' club.

What Is Efficiency?

When one starts looking for weaknesses in the West Hartford church one is fairly certain to be told that its minister is not an efficient administrator. Elden Mills says the same thing, and deplors it. In the sense of eternally manipulating tickler file cards, presiding at committee meetings and drawing blueprints of organizational strategy, this criticism has some basis. Mills frequently does not bother to attend meetings of the church's prudential com-

mittee (a New England term for a board of trustees), or of the finance committee, or of other committees where a pastor is usually expected. If he attends, he is more than likely to leave early. "Why should I be there on their necks all the time?" he demands. "If I trust them—and I should since I helped pick them—I owe it to them to give them a free hand to show what they can do."

The laymen rise to that sort of treatment. They are also vociferous in their praise of the other members of the staff Mills has gathered about him. If he lacks somewhat in his attention to the details of the church's operations, the laymen say, the rest of the staff looks after that. And Mills picked the staff, all but one member. One outsider, at least, came away from West Hartford convinced that, in terms of results, the minister is a better administrator than he credits himself with being.

Statistics Show Growth

The proof of the pudding is . . . well, you know. Here is a church which in 13 years has been transformed from a quarreling nest of petty factionalism into a unified company of active Christians, almost 2,000 in number, with another thousand in its regularly served constituency. In those 13 years the budget for congregational expenses has risen from \$14,000 to \$52,000; for benevolences from \$2,100 to \$17,000, not counting the \$3,000 raised by the Women's Guild and the many philanthropies of the church school and other organizations. Five building campaigns have raised approximately \$425,000 during this time, as a result of which the church has a completely equipped four-story parish house and educational building together with one of the most beautiful colonial-style meetinghouses in all New England.

There are approximately 1,300 families in the congregation, and about 1,100 separate pledges to the budget. The church school has reached its enrollment limit in the present plant for most of its classes, and has a waiting list of children asking to enter. The congregation packs the sanctuary on Sunday morning. One grade from the church school occupies front pews until after the preaching of the children's sermon. When it leaves, the service has to be held up for several minutes while the overflow, which has been waiting in the narthex, files in to fill the places vacated by the children.

In trying to tell how this has come to pass, the figure of Elden Mills has been set in the foreground. Not because the present influence of the West Hartford church is a one-man product. As will appear, it is anything but that. But because Elden Mills has been responsible for making many of the members of the West Hartford church believe they could do things once regarded as impossible. And because, as a Hartford banker put it, "While Elden Mills without his staff and supporting congregation couldn't have done it, the staff and congregation without Elden couldn't have done it."

Here, then, is a church bursting at its seams, making its influence felt in every corner of its own community and in many sectors of the adjoining city. What is the basis of its effectiveness? A study of this church in action leads to the conclusion that it is building solidly on four foundation stones—an active laity, a carefully planned and conducted program of religious education, a music program which has

results far beyond the singing of good church music, and an indefatigable ministry. Enough could be written about each one of these four basic ingredients in the West Hartford formula to fill all the space at our disposal.

Little Dead Wood

There is little dead wood in the West Hartford membership list. Elden Mills says that from 75 to 100 were pruned off the rolls every year for the first five years after he became pastor. Similar purges have occurred at intervals since then. One is in the making at present. The insistence on activity is as stern for the church's organizations as for its members. If one of them fails to prove that it is meeting a real need, it is summarily killed. That happened last year to the men's club.

A Women's Guild with more than 500 members heads up the women's side of the church's innumerable lay activities. This is divided into 14 circles, the only departure from the pattern familiar in other churches being that three of these meet in the evening, so that employed women can attend, or young mothers who can wish the baby off on its father. The circles meet by themselves once a month and in a combined all-day meeting once a month. They discuss phases of the local congregation's life, missions, world church problems, civic issues; they collect funds and materials for all sorts of philanthropic and missionary projects.

The West Hartford women differ from those in many other affluent churches by insisting on cooking and serving the dinners—about thirty every year between October and June—held in the church by various organizations. They say it helps to keep the spirit of congregational fellowship high. Besides, they don't want to trust any outside caterer in their gleaming kitchen. However, after wearing themselves out for years with a pre-Christmas fair, these women now hold what they call a "Fairless Fair" by means of which, through direct gifts, they raise as much money while escaping a lot of needless physical strain. At intervals of about four years the guild indulges in a sort of game of musical chairs, members being shifted about from one circle to another in order to keep cliques from developing. One of these shifts is going on now.

Men Much in Evidence

One expects women to be active in a suburban church, though one seldom finds their activity on the scale or with the enthusiasm encountered at West Hartford. The extent of male participation, however, is surprising. An attendant at a Sunday service, provided he sits in the balcony, looks out over a congregation half masculine. A Vermonter who has moved about through New England churches a good deal assured the representative of this paper that he knew no similar state of affairs in any congregation in that region. Many of these men had little to do with the church before they were drawn into the West Hartford fellowship. The chairman of the board of deacons turned out to be one such. The editor of a Hartford newspaper, one of the church's active laymen, is another.

When *The Christian Century* made its study its observer, dizzied by the activities going on around him, asked the church's secretary to list the meetings and dinners being held in the church that week. In the back of his mind

there was an expectation that the list would be printed. It will not be. It turned out to contain 32 separate items, and that in a week during which, by a trick of the calendar, the women's circles were not meeting. Men were pushing most of these activities, and not because there was a minister somewhere in the background pushing them. They were pushing because members are expected to be productive in the West Hartford congregation, men as well as women, and they are.

A Famed Church School

There is reason to suspect that many of the ministers who voted to include the West Hartford church in this study of great churches did so because of the reputation won by its church school. Since *Life* blossomed out three years ago with a pair of well scrubbed West Hartford youngsters on its cover, both clutching Bibles and on their way to Sunday school, and on its inside pages used West Hartford as the locale for a photographic essay on how a modern church school operates, there has grown a belief in church circles throughout the nation that if any church knows what it is trying to do in religious education these days, and is doing it, West Hartford is probably the one. Prof. Wesner Fallaw, in his article on "Church-Family Education: The 'How' of It" in *The Christian Century* last October 12, added to this impression when he pointed to West Hartford as one place where advanced methods of religious education are really working.

At the moment religious education at West Hartford is in somewhat of a transitional phase, brought about by the resignation last year of Mrs. Phyllis N. Maramarco, who developed the church school over a period of many years, and the coming of a successor, Florence M. Vail, also a trained educator, who is just starting to work her way into an exacting task. But no important changes have been made in the program. This starts with four weekday nursery school classes, each made up of 25 three- and four-year-olds, and carries through the twelve grades of the usual American school system. Religious education is as definitely the purpose of the nursery school as of any of the other grades. The 736 pupils in the Sunday classes are taught by a staff of 73, of whom 11 are students from the School of Religious Education of Hartford Seminary Foundation, to whose scholarship fund the West Hartford church annually contributes \$1,500.

Sunday School with a Waiting List

There is, one finds, a belief prevalent that these Hartford seminary students are the key to the effectiveness of the West Hartford church school. "Take away the trained seminary students," said a neighboring pastor, "and the West Hartford school would collapse." Examination does not support that hypothesis. These trained professional teachers—insofar as they are trained and not inexperienced young people making their first timid essays in a demanding field of labor—undoubtedly help to bolster the morale of the entire church school staff. But observation discloses disciplinary problems, particularly in older grades where teen-agers sometimes discount teachers whom they suspect of working principally for academic credit, which are nearly as serious as those encountered in Sunday schools without professional leadership.

The truth is that the strength of West Hartford's church school lies in the devoted service of the volunteer teachers, men and women, who are drawn from the congregation and give hours every week to preparation for and performance of their task. These volunteers are constantly guided and encouraged by group and personal conferences with the director. Their classroom work is under exacting supervision. But it is the patently unselfish devotion with which they discharge the responsibilities they have undertaken that makes the West Hartford church school effective. At present, as has been said, all the classes below high school level are filled to capacity. West Hartford must be one of the few church schools in the country with a waiting list.

"Seventy-five per cent of those who attend church services at West Hartford go there to hear the music." That comment, passed along to the church's minister of music, drew a grimace. "I hope not," he replied. "We hope that they come to worship, and that when they go away they feel that the whole service has given them a lift." Yet it is true that throughout New England the West Hartford church is known for its choirs. Gordon W. Stearns, the Yale graduate whom Elden Mills brought in as minister of music a decade ago, has developed, in his adult and his high school choirs, two groups which have made the contribution of great church music felt throughout the West Hartford and Hartford communities.

High School Choir Attracts

Take this reporter's word for it that the adult choir of fifty voices, reinforced by a professional quartet, maintains high technical standards and also provides one more channel through which the eagerness of the congregation's members to serve their church expresses itself. It is the high school choir which merits special attention. Youngsters enter it, if their voices permit, when they reach the ninth grade. There are 75 members, and another waiting list. Two rehearsals a week, and both are serious business from the first downbeat. The high school choir always sings with the adult choir in the church services. It also sings at all sorts of denominational and interdenominational affairs in Connecticut and near-by parts of Massachusetts. It gives an annual concert in Hartford. It has become one of Northfield's summer features.

These 75 youngsters get more than music out of their choir work. They get a sense of the meaning of the church and a loyalty to it. They get a personal religious experience which helps to account for the fact that while various instances of the confused moralities of this day have cropped up in the near-by high school student body, not a single episode of the sort has occurred in the ranks of the choir. Three of the boys at present in the choir are heading for the Christian ministry, and another may join them. One of the great days in the West Hartford church year is the Sunday after Christmas when the choir alumni home from college take over the church music for that day. It seems to be almost always the case that the first place outside their own homes college vacationers in West Hartford speed for, if they have been choir members, is Mr. Stearns' office and the room for choir rehearsals in the basement bowels of the church. One observer, at least, went away from West Hartford convinced that, by the time a young-

ster reaches high school age, such a choir program as Gordon Stearns directs can do more to put the stamp of Christian character on him than any church school.

A Working Team

The fourth of the foundation stones on which the West Hartford church stands is its ministry. Not simply the ministry of Elden Mills, or of his youthful associate, though it is an experience to watch the way in which these two complement each other, defer to each other, stand up to each other, trust each other, and to hear the way in which they praise each other. A year ago, when Mills developed a Quaker "concern" for the Arab refugees around Gaza in Palestine and departed for six months' work with the American Friends Service Committee there, no one marveled that he was ready to turn his pulpit over to the 32-year-old Finley—who, by the way, is a former Methodist. Elden Mills shouts with laughter today when he tells of a letter received at Gaza in which one of his parishioners told him, "The only difference I can see in the preaching is that when you were here we used to get our illustrations from the *New Yorker*, and now we get them from the *Atlantic Monthly*!"

The ministry at West Hartford is that of a total staff of nine, each one hand-picked for a special job, each carrying enough work for at least two, and all working together like the members of a team who not only have learned to play together but *like* to play together. It is not the easiest of places in which to work. There are innumerable denominational backgrounds represented in the membership; Elden Mills says that he has even received an average of seven Roman Catholics a year throughout his pastorate. Such differences could make trouble. Yet there is no sense of dividing lines or of tension between these elements. When the music committee distributed a questionnaire asking the congregation whether it would be all right if the Methodist Hymnal were adopted for use in church services, only one diehard Congregationalist objected. In other words, the ministry has the confidence of the congregation. With that to count on, it can steadily move ahead, leading in the building of a great church.

Where Are the Weak Spots?

Many instances could be cited in which this ministry, on the job every day from early in the morning until late at night, has saved individuals and families from shipwreck. But when one is dealing with such a community as West Hartford it is impossible to do this without either so disguising the stories as to falsify them or betraying the confidence of easily identified persons. Personal transformations are, however, continually happening. "The only ones I can't do much for," says Mills, "are the alcoholics. In their case I'm too impatient to understand them or to help them. So we turn them over to Alcoholics Anonymous. But let me tell you about the Christian Scientist broker who was being sued . . ." And the pastor begins to recount another personal history of a sort that could keep a "court of human relations" radio program going indefinitely.

Every church has its weak spots. Where does West Hartford fail to measure up to its responsibilities? Members of the church have pointed to some of the lacks which follow. This paper's investigation has led it to the others.

Despite all that has been said about the enthusiastic participation by the congregation in the church's life, there are still members whose relationship is more nominal than active. They are glad to have their children in the church school. They attend services off and on. They expect the ministries of the church for marriages, baptisms, burials. But the church is really little more to them than a mark of the community's social propriety. West Hartford has far fewer than the quota of such members usual in a suburban congregation, and it works incessantly to transform those it has. But they are there, and they constitute one of the problems.

Elden Mills regrets that, among its many organizations, the church has no Council for Social Action. This does not mean that it is indifferent to social issues. One evening while the representative of *The Christian Century* was on hand, for example, he listened to the board of deacons discuss plans for settling a D. P. family in the community. At the same time, representatives of the church were dealing with a police judge who had formed a bad habit of turning drunken drivers loose with hardly a reprimand. It is possible that if the church had an organized social action council it might not find much more for it to do than the members are now doing. But, again, it might. It might, for example, make a study of salaries paid the thousands of clerical workers in near-by Hartford's insurance companies, and bring the results before the company executives who live in West Hartford.

Talent Going to Waste

It seems a pity that none of the active laymen or laywomen who are so plentiful in this church are serving the ecumenical movement on the boards and committees of the Federal Council or of the World Council. New York, where such bodies generally meet, is only two and a half hours away. The West Hartford church shows its ecumenical interest by making the largest contribution of any church in Connecticut to the Hartford and state church councils. Its members give unstinting service to both those bodies. It makes a sizable yearly subscription to the federal and world bodies. But its members are not directly tied into the working of those bodies, and they should be. The fact that they are not may not be West Hartford's fault.

Some of the members feel a need for a more direct presentation of the claims of the Christian life in and through the church school. "We need more out-and-out Bible study by adults," said one member. "More of our parents should be taking part in the studies their children are pursuing," said another. "One thing we need," still another observed after reviewing the carefully graded curriculum of the school, "is less indirection in our approach. There's too much background—background for the life of Jesus, background for the history of the Jews, background for the growth of the church, background for the development of ethical ideas. We need more foreground. How to live as Christians is what counts for these young people, and we are not tackling the requirements of that kind of education directly enough."

Obviously, one of the weaknesses is the fact that the church has reached a point where it is afraid to grow. With a spacious new plant of such impressive proportions, this sounds ridiculous. But it is a fact. While *The Christian*

Century was making its study, the West Hartford church was preparing to take part in the Hartford campaign for the Federal Council's united evangelistic advance—keeping its fingers crossed all the while lest it turn up a lot of prospects it could not properly look after. "We never ask people to join this church," said one of the staff. "If they seek membership, we are embarrassed, for we have to tell them that there is no room for their children in our church school. And when we have to say the same thing to parents who are not members of the church, but should be brought into the church by first entering the children in the church school, they often go away thinking they have been highbatted. What are we to do?"

One answer would be, of course, to enlarge the church plant. But a congregation which has subscribed to five building funds in nine years, and is still paying on its indebtedness, hesitates to plunge into another heavy financial campaign. Perhaps the time has come when some process of congregational fission should set in, and a new church be started in another part of the town. West Hartford

is not overchurched. Perhaps the projected Presbyterian church which the West Hartford Congregationalists are welcoming into the community will help to relieve the immediate pressure of this problem. But clearly no church holds a satisfactory relationship to its community when its first thought, if prospective members approach, is, "What in the world can we do with them?"

Suburbia may turn out to be the Waterloo of American Protestantism. The West Hartford church is aware of the pitfalls of complacency and social conformity which are spread in the path of the unwary suburban congregation. At least one observer came away convinced that this church is going about the task of making its spiritual impact felt in such a suburban community in ways which hold great promise. The most impressive thing one sees at West Hartford is the unusual degree to which the members of the congregation, men and women, boys and girls, participate in its activities. The most hopeful thing is the "holy impatience" shown in the presence of still unsolved problems.

IV. Bellevue Baptist Church

Memphis, Tennessee

AMONG the citizens of Memphis, not many great and not many mighty are members of the Bellevue Baptist Church, but thousands of earnest Christian people are. Other churches enroll most of the prominent figures in this midsouth city of 355,000, but Bellevue Baptist carries on its rolls no less than 8,000 of the common people whom God, as Lincoln said, must prefer because "he makes so many of them." Butchers and bakers, doctors and salesmen, merchants and mechanics, truckers and carpenters, teachers and typists, engineers and lawyers meet here from week to week in a revival that has been progressing with increasing power for fifty years. Most of them carry well thumbed Bibles. They study the Scriptures diligently and pray in simple faith. They instruct their numerous children and review the far-flung activities of their great Southern Baptist denomination. Twice every Sunday they listen with unflagging attention and an occasional "Amen!" to their minister, Dr. Robert Greene Lee, who they declare proudly and with conviction is "the greatest preacher on earth."

Bellevue is the center of their life in this world and the broad avenue down which they march in disciplined ranks toward the next, singing rhythmic gospel songs and shouting defiance at a devil who is at least as real as Marshal Stalin. In an insecure and shifting existence, their church holds together for them the things that do not change. Out of the Word of God it nurtures the faith born in little chapels far away in the southern countryside or within its own walls. Out of the Bible it builds a powerful sense of community in the work of the Kingdom of righteousness and fans into flame the hope of an eternal reward in a sunlit tomorrow.

When The Christian Century asked the Protestant pastors of the nation to name the great churches of America, it was practically certain that the vote of southern ministers would place the Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis among the top twelve congregations in the country. It is the second-largest church of the Southern Baptist Convention, which has more members and more congregations than any other denomination in the south. Its pastor is finishing his second term as president of the convention and is one of the region's most popular pulpit orators. One of his sermons is almost as famous as Russell Conwell's "Acres of Diamonds," having been delivered nearly 400 times and made into a motion picture.

Bellevue Baptist members contribute a third of a million dollars a year to Christian work, including

over \$100,000 to missions. They have the largest Sunday school in the Southern Baptist Convention. In addition, each Sunday evening nearly a thousand members, young and old, meet in the Baptist Training Union to study Christian faith and work. They then enter the large auditorium and help to swell the evening congregation, which, like that which meets in the morning, taxes the capacity of the church. Today Bellevue Baptist is building a million-dollar auditorium of even greater size and is planning to remodel and continue to use its present structure. Every year the church adds nearly a thousand new members to its rolls.

Throughout the south, the Bellevue Baptist Church is hailed as an eminently faithful, strong and successful congregation. This study will try to show to what degree it deserves the nomination given it by the ministers of America. It should also offer Protestants an opportunity to become better acquainted with one of the most important American denominations. Bellevue stands close to the center, spiritually as well as geographically, of the Southern Baptist Convention.

This denomination—whether those outside realize it or not and whether those inside like it or not—is a major element in American Protestant life. Its 25,000 churches constitute the second-largest and in some ways the most homogeneous evangelical denomination in the country. Since 1925 this body has grown from 3.5 to 6 million members, a gain of 67 per cent. The attitudes and convictions of its members and the achievements and hopes of its churches must be taken into account. For American Protestant conceptions of religious liberty, which we derive from the New Testament by way of the Baptists, are under fire in this land and throughout the world.

Some knowledge of the Bellevue Baptist Church is also necessary if American Protestants are to understand themselves. We are, as the Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches declared, responsible for one another. That responsibility arises because churches acknowledging the same Head are related, whether they acknowledge the relationship or not. Dr. Lee says: "We as Baptists do not consider ourselves Protestants, except as we protest against evils. I realize that we are called Protestants by all who are not Baptists, but factually this is an error." The view

which non-Baptists get of themselves in the Bellevue mirror will probably disconcert some of them. And the results of an effort by non-Baptists to understand this church and denomination may contain elements of novelty to Baptists. But

The Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee, was chosen in The Christian Century's poll of 100,000 ministers as the church most worthy of study in a large city in the southeast quarter of the country. This includes the following states: Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Florida. Another large city church frequently voted for in this area was First Baptist, Richmond.

the attempt needed to be made, and this is how it began:

Before writing this interpretation of the Bellevue Church, an editor of *The Christian Century* spent nearly a week in Memphis. He studied materials which have been published concerning the church. He accumulated data and impressions in numerous interviews with the pastor, members of his staff and persons belonging to the church. He attended Sunday services and other meetings, small and large. He talked with Memphians of other churches and civic organizations. Everywhere he was received with the utmost courtesy and helpfulness. He was given every facility for seeing Bellevue at work in a normal week.

The first impression created by Bellevue is that it is a small town church grown to enormous size and into intense, systematic activity. From some angles its main building has more the appearance of a school than of a church. Soon one discovers that this is not as incongruous as it seems, for Bellevue's educational function is very important. People come and go in considerable numbers every day of the week, and on Sundays traffic ties itself into knots for several blocks in every direction. This is to be expected, for streets around the church were not designed for use by a congregation which numbered 8,103 in October 1949 and has a Sunday school enrolling 4,172, with an average attendance through the year of around 2,500. The church provides some parking facilities, which are soon to be enlarged, but it has clearly grown too big for its neighborhood. Nobody seems to know what should be done about it, and nobody worries very much.

Centrally Located in City

Aside from the cramped condition of its immediate environment, Bellevue Baptist's location in Memphis is favorable to its growth. It lies between the main business district along the river and the principal residence area toward the east. While the church buildings are situated on secondary streets, whose large houses are changing from single-family occupancy to apartments and smaller units, and sometimes to small business premises, they lie between some of the chief east-west traffic arteries. On Sunday morning so many people leave buses on these streets for the church that drivers, instead of calling the street, sing out, "Bellevue Baptist Church!"

In its larger setting, Bellevue Church is also fortunate. It is located in Memphis, which sits beside the mighty Mississippi and is an important center of manufacture and trade. Handling more cotton than any other city in the country, Memphis is the economic and commercial hub of a region covering parts of seven states. It boasts that its people have the highest per family income of any city in its midsouth region, which includes parts of Tennessee, Mississippi, Kentucky, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana and Alabama. Because it provides employment at attractive wages, because it offers educational and other opportunities, Memphis has grown from 162,000 in 1920 to 292,000 in 1940 and to an estimated 355,000 in 1950.

Since approximately half of the four million people in the Memphis trade area are Baptists, it is to be expected that when whites move to the city a large proportion of them will seek out one of the 58 Baptist churches which serve their race. Of these, Bellevue is the most widely known, and so it is the church to which most newcomers

go first. Many of them have seen Dr. Lee, who is in great demand as a speaker all over the south, or have heard his voice on the radio. If they haven't, they have heard about him and his church. So it is natural for them to seek out "Dr. Lee's church." At Bellevue they find a ready welcome, a preacher whose language they understand and to whose pulpit eloquence they respond, and a Christian fellowship with people like themselves who remind them of home. The church, on its part, fashions its program to their needs and tries to fan their initial interest into lasting devotion.

Dr. Lee has been pastor at Bellevue for 22 years. During that time he has given the church a character so distinctive and so firmly outlined that it well deserves inclusion in any rounded study of contemporary American Protestantism. What makes Bellevue something more than just another big city congregation?

Evangelism Has Priority

Well, for one thing, Bellevue Baptist Church witnesses to the validity of a central concern for Christian evangelism. Whether one accepts or rejects the methods this church uses to serve that end, the objective itself must be accorded respect. Bellevue people often remind themselves that the Head of the church commands them to "go into all the world and make disciples of every creature." So in Bellevue the evangelistic emphasis underlies every sermon, every pastoral call, the entire educational program, and even the church's efforts at relief for the needy and recreation for the idle. There is little indirection or subtlety about the way this church goes about its evangelistic task. Every service ends with an altar call. So active are pastor and congregation in their pursuit of souls that in 22 years 14,910 people have been added to the rolls, or an average of 12 a week.

Dr. Lee has on his desk a plaque presented to him by the congregation. On a bronze representation of the Book of Life is engraved the number of persons who were baptized and those who transferred from other churches each year since he arrived on December 11, 1927. The largest total was in 1945-46, when an even 1,000 joined. The smallest total for any year was for 1932-33, when it was 426. In that year depression and a heavy church debt created something of a crisis for both minister and people. How both survived it is suggested by the text from Acts 11:24 which is inscribed on the plaque: "For he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith and much people was added unto the Lord."

A Shifting Population

Bellevue manages to hold a little less than half of those who join the church. The average net increase in membership each year for the past 22 years is 303. The annual average of total additions during that time is 665. What happens to the 362? Some of them die. Some transfer to other Memphis churches for one reason or another. Some "backslide" in spite of everything, including some very plain talk from the pulpit. But the probability is that most of the loss is due to people's moving away. Not everybody who comes to this city strikes his roots in deeply. Some leave because they fail to make good, others because they succeed too well. Many move on because they are infected

with the general restlessness and insecurity of the time. Taking everything into account, however, it seems to us that the proportion who leave Bellevue is rather high. Is it higher than in an average large city church? This is a point on which churches might exchange experiences to their mutual benefit.

Bellevue has one or two revival meetings a year. Preparations for these concerted efforts include weeks of prayer, the alerting of teachers and officers of every church organization, intensive efforts to visit and invite those on the church's list of prospects. In February this year the church took part in a house-to-house religious survey of Memphis, conducted by the local council of churches. So far as we were able to learn, this is the first time Bellevue has cooperated with the council, and it did so only after making it clear that the council should understand that Bellevue was not committed to anything except this one canvass. Out of this cooperative project Bellevue got hundreds of names of unaffiliated persons who expressed preference for it, and promptly went to work to interest them in its church life. In March, a revival added 135 members.

Baptist Spiritual Vitality

Some members leave Bellevue for other churches because they tire of its continuous revivalistic emphasis. But it is safe to say that a larger number stay because, rightly believing that evangelistic concern is of the essence of the Christian faith, they find Bellevue's expression of that concern satisfying. Many probably would insist that evangelism and revivalism are necessarily and always the same. There is a historic reason for this. After the Civil War, when all organized life in the south ebbed low, Baptist evangelists continued their efforts through this time of troubles. They were generally unschooled men who had heard "a call to preach" and went forth without benefit of any ecclesiastical sanction to exhort whoever would listen to flee from the wrath to come, accept the "plan of salvation" and be baptized. The religious culture they propagated may not have been very profound, but it exalted the Bible and demanded in immersion an act of faith, decision and commitment that was public, dramatic and unforgettable. It identified the person baptized with Christ and twenty centuries of Christian obedience.

By bearing their witness faithfully in the bitter years after the war, Baptist evangelists planted the seeds of thousands of local churches and gave the people of what is sometimes irreverently called the "Bible belt" the confidence they still have in the spiritual vitality of Baptist faith. They conditioned men to accept an aggressive evangelism as essential to Christian self-respect. More important, they unrelentingly hammered into the southern religious consciousness a recognition of the reality of the living God, the terrors of divine judgment against sin, the forgiving and saving power of Jesus Christ, the sustaining comfort of the Holy Spirit. The Bellevue Church makes no claim to rising above or improving on this heritage. On the contrary, by word and deed it glories in it and perpetuates it.

In addition to its demonstration of the centrality of a vital evangelism, Bellevue Baptist Church can teach American Protestantism that it can and should strengthen its roots among the common people. The size and vigor

of this church demonstrates what ordinary folk, fired with what Dr. Lee calls a "supernaturalistic" faith, can do. This is a church of Christ, but it is also a church of the people. There is no reason to think that persons of means are discriminated against here, and they undoubtedly derive considerable comfort from the economic views of the minister. Our *Christian Century* editor sat in Dr. Lee's Bible class when he stated his position as follows: "I believe in money. I believe in a man making all of it he honestly can. I believe in it being used for Christ." The poorest man in the class said "Amen!" as loudly as the richest. It is generally people of modest means who teach the classes, man the committees, pay the bills and do the work which makes things go at Bellevue.

Everybody Is Somebody

The ten men who contribute the largest amount to Bellevue's annual budget of more than a third of a million dollars give a total of around \$25,000. One of these is the minister, who contributes over half of his salary of \$12,500 to the church treasury. The remainder comes from people whose average income per family is around \$300 a month. There are 1,700 titers in the church, and they contribute a large share of its income. More than 3,000 people make pledges to the budget, and others, including some titers who do not specify what amount they will contribute, give regularly. Contributions average \$65 per person per year, children with no income being included.

"Everybody is somebody" at Bellevue, says Dr. Lee, and large numbers constantly share in its work. During the typical week of February 26, the church held 30 meetings. It has literally hundreds of groups or organizations, ranging from Sunday school classes, mostly small, and Baptist Training Unions to Women's Missionary Societies and a Men's Brotherhood. Each has its set of members who take responsibility for its work, who study and teach, organize and minister in its behalf. Without this enormous volume of steady, persistent and willing volunteer endeavor, the church would not be what it is.

Pastor-Centered Organization

The church has a board of directors. It has a building committee appointed by the pastor which reports to the congregation, step by step, all plans relating to the new building. Its board of deacons is made up of 70 persons who are charged with the general spiritual welfare of the church. The four main working groups are found in the Sunday school, the Women's Missionary Union, the Baptist Training Union and the Men's Brotherhood. There are also 33 church committees having responsibility for varied matters. The order in which a list published by the church places them is: board of directors, treasurers, clerks, finance, the Lord's Supper, building, decorations, Christian literature, baptismal services, library, local benevolences, young people, parking, bereavement, nursery, pulpit supply, extra chairs, publicity, the Bellevue Mission, landscaping, the church bus, hospitality, collections, athletics, song books, visual aids and sound equipment, the church "Hut," ushers, music, visitors, Boy Scouts and fellowship club.

The relationship between the activities of these groups is not very well defined, and *The Christian Century* never

did understand it clearly enough to be able to construct an organizational chart. The church has a constitution, but that does not provide much help on this point. It is probable that committees are set up to meet needs as they arise, and overlapping is ironed out on an *ad hoc* practical basis. The introduction of a principle of order through a clearer definition of lines of responsibility would ordinarily be a necessity as well as good organizational procedure. But at Bellevue it would probably be considered too hierarchial and undemocratic. As things stand, nobody can assert that his work is more important than that of anyone else, and each does his task, whatever it is, as unto the Lord.

Dr. Lee explains the principle on which this church works as follows: "All of our organization is for two purposes—to bring souls into Christ's Kingdom and to put the saved to work. Our various committees are simply means to that end. We do not want the saved to be 'branded and turned loose' or 'dipped and done with.' From a practical standpoint, it can be understood at a glance that it takes many 'hands' to carry on the physical work around our church. People feel that they have a part in winning souls for Christ when they usher in his name, when they are doorkeepers in the house of God, when they keep the nursery open so that young parents can attend services, when they drive the Bellevue bus around the scheduled route and provide transportation to our church for people who otherwise might not be able to attend. This explanation goes for every committee named. I tell them that 'as is his part who goeth to battle, so it is with him who stays by the stuff.'"

A Self-Giving Minister

Such simple town-meeting democracy has the advantage of giving every member who has a mind to work a sense of the importance of his contribution. It seems to have kept the church from being dominated by wealth or by the cliques that sometimes acquire power which is not commensurate with their spiritual stature. Whether intentionally or not, it places great responsibility on the minister and his staff. Dr. Lee undoubtedly has more power than any Methodist or Episcopal bishop. So it is time now to take a careful look at Bellevue's ministerial leadership.

While Bellevue Baptist is far from being a one-man church, its life cannot be understood without taking into account its dominant personality. Robert G. Lee is a tall man with a big shock of white hair. He dresses neatly, generally in light gray. His manner outside the pulpit is quiet, almost shy; his voice soft; his smile ready; his blue eyes honest and friendly. Little children run to him whenever he appears. He has an enormous capacity for remembering names and recalling incidents of importance to individuals and families. His accent is broadly South Carolinian and his speech, particularly in his own pulpit, sparkles with southern idiom.

There is a saying in the church that he would die for Bellevue. His people openly declare that they love him, and there is no doubt that their affection is returned. He spends a great deal of time calling on members of his church. Whenever they need him he responds to their calls, even if they come in the middle of the night. One night when *The Christian Century* was studying his church, Dr. Lee was called at 1:30 to the hospital where

a Bellevue member was dying. He prayed for the departing soul and comforted the family after death came.

When he went outside a drunken man, with only a sweater doing duty for an overcoat, approached him. The man wanted to go home and complained of the cold. Dr. Lee took him in his car and started. On the way across the city he learned that the man, who "smelled like fourteen skunks," had been discharged from the navy six months before and "had been drunk ever since." The pastor pressed upon his passenger the wickedness of drink and the certainty of damnation if he kept on his present course. Then he urged him to come to church and give his heart to Christ. On the following Sunday he referred four times in talks to his Bible class and in sermons to "that poor sailor," said he had his address and meant to keep after him until he was saved. Nobody doubted that he would do so.

Son of a Sharecropper

Dr. Lee often alludes to his boyhood as the son of a poor sharecropper, and his humble beginnings are a tie between him and his people. He and seven brothers and sisters were born in a log cabin in South Carolina. On Christmas each received an orange and a little stick candy. The rest of the year these were luxuries beyond their means. The man who now holds doctor's degrees from four institutions received only a smattering of education in his boyhood, but he was determined to get more and to become a preacher. The poverty of his family kept him behind the plow until he reached manhood. Then he went to Panama and worked for a year on the canal to earn money to start college. When he returned, however, he found his family in debt and all his savings went to his parents.

Penniless, he entered the preparatory school of Furman University when he was 22, working his way by delivering newspapers from three to six o'clock in the morning, carrying students' laundry on commission and occasionally milking the cow of the president, Dr. E. M. Poteat. After a year he was enrolled in the college, and four years later graduated with honors after working all his way. He had already been ordained by his home church. In 1913, on graduation, he married and took his first full-time pastorate at Edgefield, South Carolina.

For many years he struggled on a meager salary to pay school debts. A daughter was born and a son adopted. Later he served Baptist churches at Chester, South Carolina, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Charleston, South Carolina. When he came to Bellevue in 1927, he was beginning to be widely known as a successful minister. His salary began at \$7,500. When the depression came, he insisted that it be reduced, even though the church's membership had grown by then from the 1,430 he found on coming to Memphis to 3,159, and its Sunday school enrollment had jumped from 1,554 to 2,396.

'Pay Day Some Day'

Dr. Lee's fame as a preacher is almost legendary in the south. Every year on the first Sunday in May, when he repeats his sermon "Pay Day Some Day," so many people attend that in recent years the service has been held in Ellis Auditorium, which seats 9,000. The sermon, like

many of his best, concerns an Old Testament episode. It is a dramatic rendition of the story of Naboth's vineyard. The principal characters are introduced one by one. Then follows the story of Ahab's covetousness and cowardice, Jezebel's wickedness leading to the murder of Naboth, and Elijah's sentence of doom on both. Gradually, with cumulative power, Dr. Lee portrays the slow but certain wheeling into action of the forces of divine retribution. When Ahab is killed and Jezebel finally is thrown down from the wall to the dogs, everybody is certain that sin's payday cannot be evaded in this life or the next. The sermon is a 20th century equivalent to Jonathan Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

On February 26 of this year, a typical Sunday, Dr. Lee lectured for a half-hour on the Sunday school lesson to a men's Bible class, preached for 40 minutes to an overflow congregation at morning worship (giving the morning Scripture lesson from memory), received 17 persons into the church, conducted what Baptists call "the ordinance of the Lord's Supper" for the half of the congregation who stayed. In the afternoon he spoke at a funeral service and in the evening preached for 45 minutes to a large audience. Then he immersed 15 people in the baptistry at the front of the church. When the service was over at a little after nine, he had an hour to go home, pack his bag and catch a train to some speaking engagement. Some of the phrases and sentences he used that day follow:

If I was some people's noses, I'd secede from their faces.
A man who has not accepted Christ is not a child of God.
In some churches refrigeration takes the place of consecration.
Nonsensical evolutionists say that Christ is only a man.
Now no man names a child, a dog or even a billygoat after Judas.

Samson fell asleep on Delilah's lap in the devil's barbershop.
One Ananias inside a church can do more harm than all opposition outside.

Subversive activity against government is not as harmful as subversive inactivity against the church.

When you stay away from church, you vote for it to die.
Don't turn away from the Lord's meat to the devil's slop.
Some people do what even the devil will not do. The devil won't get drunk. He's too busy.

A real sure-enough Christian home.
Home to some people is just the place where they stay while their car is getting fixed.

I'd feel disgraced as long as I live if I saw my daughter's picture in the paper with a cocktail glass in her hand.

You say this is a new day? The devil, sin, hell, penitentiaries, chain gangs—these are not new.

Some homes are devils' incubators.
They say that 5,000 people in Oklahoma City stayed home from church today because that leopard got loose. He'd have a hard time chewing up some of those tough Oklahomans who never go to church.

If I had some atomic bombs about as big as the end of my thumb and had God's permission, I'd blow up every saloon in this country.

Liberals teach more and more about less and less.
Children should honor their fathers and mothers, but it is pretty hard to honor a cigarette-sucking mother, a booze-soaked father.

Legalized booze? You can as easily control a powder can in hell.

A child born of ungodly parents is more damned into this world than born into it.

When love dies in a home, it is in ruins.

As a preacher, Dr. Lee is not particularly impressive at first, but he proves full of surprises. His voice is a little too

flat and high-pitched to be pleasing, but it turns out to be full of variety. His manner, usually quiet, can suddenly change to the dramatic. His gestures and inflections are not the reflexes of an inner tension, as is often the case with speakers, but are as closely a part of his capacity for expression as his voice. He generally speaks without notes, although he writes out his sermons in advance. He frequently alludes to the Bible, quoting long passages from memory. He has published 20 books, mostly of sermons.

Bellevue's Theology

Dr. Lee's theology is fundamentalist, with a stronger accent on denominational loyalty than most fundamentalists have. The center of his preaching is Jesus Christ. Every man must choose or reject Christ, and his eternal destiny depends on his choice. Through faith in Christ alone can the repentant sinner find salvation from hell. Dr. Lee preaches that Christ is coming again, that no man can know the day or the hour, that all should flee from the wrath to come. He places evolutionists in science and unitarians in theology in the same boat and consigns the boat to perdition. He finds the Old Testament almost as profitable as the New, and recently advised a Memphian who was thinking of consulting a psychiatrist to read Psalm 34 and save his money for better use.

The theological language Dr. Lee uses is well understood by his people, for it is the fare on which most of them were raised. In preaching it, the minister's air of sincerity adds to their own prior conviction. Dr. Lee reaches people by getting inside their minds and projecting their hopes and fears, their affections and hatreds, their contrariness and generosity, on a cosmic canvas. His success justifies their efforts to improve their own condition. His conservatism embodies their fierce resistance to forces and ideas which upset the cozy private worlds they vainly try to create for themselves and their families.

The Bellevue pastor is a strong personality. He would probably have made his mark in law or politics had he moved in that direction. But he is not a prophet or pioneer. He is a defender of the faith as he understands it. If others understand it in other terms, if they are concerned over questions he regards as irrelevant or already settled, they should not discount the significance of his devotion to the high calling to which he is committed.

Relations with Other Churches

Dr. Lee is an individualist, and so has little time for interchurch activities. His church is not a member of the Memphis Council of Churches, even though that organization is beginning to do effective work, but he has accepted the council's invitations to address it on several occasions. Dr. Lee does not publicly criticize the church council and considers himself "a friend, personally, to all who compose its membership"—"although," he adds, "I do not agree with a lot of the things they advocate. I know their position and attitudes and they know mine—all without suspicion or animosity." He is critical of the Federal Council of Churches, but last year when the Federal Council was attacked in a resolution presented to the Southern Baptist Convention, it was Dr. Lee's short speech which resulted in the tabling of the motion. He did not explain his action, but it was obviously intended to save the convention from

a row which might have split the denomination. The same issue is coming up when the convention meets next month in Chicago.

Civic organizations and movements, of which Memphis has a heartening number, arouse little interest at Bellevue. The Memphis Community Council, for example, includes several churches among its member organizations. Bellevue is not one of them. If it were, it could do a better job at helping people who need relief—whom it does try to help—and it would be taken advantage of less often. During recent years the *Memphis Press-Scimitar* has led a partly successful revolt against some of the excesses of the Crump political machine, which has held Memphis in the grip of its power for decades. The *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, after extended agitation, has got the police force to employ Negroes, who make up over 40 per cent of the city's population. These two events probably are Memphis' most important postwar gains in civic and human relations. In the former, Bellevue was silent. Of the latter, Dr. Lee says that "a group of Negroes came to talk with me about it, and they will tell you that I had a bigger part than any preacher in Memphis (so they say) in getting Negroes employed." The church actively battles the liquor interests, and cooperates with others in doing so.

Relations with the Convention

Dr. Lee was elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention two years ago when that numerous body met in Memphis. Since then he has traveled extensively throughout the country and has given a great deal of time to denominational affairs. He usually manages to preach from his own pulpit on Sundays. There is some criticism of these absences within a congregation which has never been taught to assume really sacrificial responsibility for church affairs outside its own walls, except in the form of contributions of money. The Memphis pastor's election was generally regarded as a victory for the more conservative wing of a conservative denomination. Since it took place, tensions within the convention have increased, although Dr. Lee has loyally used his considerable influence in behalf of peace.

An outstanding feature of the ministry of Bellevue Baptist Church is its program of Christian education. Where else but in a large city church does one find a continuous, highly organized educational enterprise for hundreds of entire families? At Bellevue the four adult departments are not simply a sort of nursery for grownups where children park their bored parents while they attend Sunday school. The Bellevue Sunday school has well over 2,000 adults on its rolls and an average attendance of around 1,200. Their discussions are piloted by the best leadership in the church.

For this large number of adults and children, the church spends around \$6,000 a year on religious educational literature, in addition to the \$200 used annually to add to the church library. This seems a small sum per capita, but it probably compares favorably with what others do. Southern Baptist literature is technically some of the most attractive produced by any denomination. In layout, typography and use of color it is unsurpassed. The denomination cooperates with 40 others in the International Council of Religious Education in arranging for the subject matter of some of this lesson material.

A feature of the Bellevue Sunday school is its famous nursery, which occupies an entire house immediately east of the main church building. This cozy white bungalow—a gift of Dr. and Mrs. Lee to the church—has room after room with attractive furnishings scaled down for babies and toddlers. It even has germ-killing lamps. It is staffed by an imposing number of nurses and teachers and its sights and sounds are something no visitor to Bellevue should miss.

Teachers in the Bellevue Sunday school are asked to sign a "teacher's covenant." Those who sign it pledge themselves to come on time, to work to "reach the highest efficiency possible in teaching God's word," to take teacher training courses and attend weekly and monthly teachers' meetings, and to attend preaching services. They also answer the following: "Will you try by the grace of God to live a consecrated Christian life, denying yourself of all questionable amusements such as card playing and dancing? Do you believe in the Bible doctrines as held by Baptists?" All new members of the church are requested to fill out a "talent search questionnaire." This asks each member to indicate the services he or she is willing to offer in Sunday school, women's missionary union, the choirs, training union, worship services, men's brotherhood, prayer meeting, and in such special matters as typing, telephoning, poster-making and visiting. These cards are constantly used by the church staff in filling out vacancies in volunteer leadership.

A People's School

One aspect of Bellevue church life which is probably unequaled anywhere is its development of what is called the "Baptist Training Union." This is a Sunday evening school for Christian study and action. Every Sunday evening more than 900 Bellevue young people and adults spend an hour discussing the work and doctrine of the church. This goes on in 70 classes, called "unions." Here men and women learn about the worldwide missionary action of the denomination. They become familiar with its schools, hospitals and other ministries at home. Using materials prepared for the discussion, they review the whole program of the church and their place in it. They read the Bible, learn to lead in prayer and to speak before others. They then move into the evening service of their church. Thus the Baptist Training Union contributes to the evening service what the Sunday school does to morning worship. It grew out of the young people's societies of an earlier generation, expanding upward to take in all adults who can be interested and downward to take in children of ten or twelve. Miss Helen Gardner, director of church activities at Bellevue, is directly responsible for the remarkable growth of the Training Union here.

As it operates at Bellevue, the Training Union is a highly successful educational enterprise, largely for adults, in Christian responsibility. Its missionary emphasis, to take a single example, is giving great numbers of grass-root Christians an understanding of people in other lands. What other institution besides the church is doing this for all sorts and conditions of people?

These then are some highlights of the living reality which is Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, nominated by the ministers of this country as one of the great churches of

America. We have not even attempted to list all its activities, which run from a men's prayer meeting, held every week early on Monday morning, to high school youngsters' parties complete with gay balloons, spotlights, a master of ceremonies and a ventriloquist. But the church, it is clear, would prefer to be judged by its faithfulness to its main purpose, which is Christian evangelism. What does that mean for human lives? The following stories suggest an answer. They might be multiplied a great many times.

How Lives Are Changed

A year ago a pathetic wreck of a little man, who was both a drunkard and a drug addict, dragged himself into Dr. Lee's office. He had lost his job; his Christian wife had left him; his children were in an orphanage. Dr. Lee told him that "what he needed was Jesus—to accept him as his Savior, confessing all his sins, coming in repentance to the cross." He accepted Christ, joined the church. The church helped him to get a job. Later he secured a house and got his family together. He slipped once or twice, but with the help of Christ and some Christian friends, he won out. Since then five of his seven children have been baptized. Now he has a little business of his own. Every Sunday the family comes to Sunday school and church in the small truck he uses in his business, the little girls dressed up and sitting in chairs in the back.

A big railroad man, respected and honest but not a member of the church, one morning heard Dr. Lee, who was thinking about him, say: "You may be a great success as a farmer but what, in the light of eternity, does that profit you if you never walk the green fields of Paradise? You may be a great lawyer but what, in the light of eternity, does that enrich you if you are not acquitted at the judgment bar of God? You may be a great success as a railroad man, but what wisdom do you show if you rush past all the warning lights God swings across your road and crash into hell as your terminal station?" When the man did not respond to the invitation, Dr. Lee went over to his house that afternoon, "never doubting," as he says, "that he would be there, for the same Holy Spirit who helped Philip in his dealings with the Ethiopian eunuch had put it into my heart to speak to Mr. Frazier. He greeted me warmly. I told him why I had come. He accepted Christ that afternoon and I baptized him. He was greatly moved, before and after his baptism, saying that the most wonderful and impressive thing in his life had taken place."

Visited by Convicts

One night the pastor worked late in his church office. He heard a knock. At the door were two young men he had never seen before. "We want money," one said menacingly. Dr. Lee invited them in and said, "I think you fellows are up to no good. You may be fixing to get into trouble." They told him they had just got out of prison. They were very bitter and declared that society

was against them. "We need a chance," they said. The pastor answered, "What you fellows need is Jesus. In him you have a chance to be saved, to have the past blotted out, to become men who will weigh something and measure something for God." A long discussion ensued. Using his Bible, the minister showed them "how to be saved." They accepted Christ. All three knelt and prayed. The next Sunday they came to church, confessed repentance of their sins, and were baptized. The pastor helped them to get jobs, promising he would be responsible for them. Today both are married and have happy Christian homes. One teaches a Sunday school class in Memphis. The other is a faithful member of a Baptist church in Mississippi.

A cross-country truck driver and his wife were on the verge of divorce. Neither was a Christian. The man for whom the driver worked invited him to Bellevue. He felt it was wise to accept the invitation and he and his wife came to church. He was impressed, but his wife was not. A Sunday school teacher visited them, won their confidence, urged them to seek God's forgiveness for the kind of life they told her they had been living, prayed with them. They promised to forget the divorce. The next Sunday night they came forward after the sermon, confessed with tears their faith in Christ and joined the church. That was nearly a year ago. They are among the most devoted and consecrated members of Bellevue, are tithers, and have been responsible for several other conversions. The husband is now in business for himself and so spends more time with his family.

'That, Colonel, Is God's Plan of Salvation'

At Kennedy hospital, where war casualties are cared for, Dr. Lee visited a Colonel Troutwine concerning whom a friend had written. The officer was a very sick man. When he was told what friend had told the minister about him, he was irritated. "He thinks I am a hell-bound sinner," said the colonel, and pointed out that he believed in God and tried to live an upright life. Dr. Lee said that was not good enough, that "it is by God's unlimited and unmerited favor to the utterly undeserving and by man's repentance toward God and through his faith in Christ that a man is saved." Reading John 1:12; 3:18, 3:36 and some other verses, he said, "That, colonel, is God's plan of salvation." Then he quoted some lines of "the sweet old gospel hymn 'Just as I am,'" and asked the officer to give him his hand if he would trust Christ. A thin, blue-veined hand reached out, a prayer was said and the minister left. Two weeks later the colonel died and went, "with his greatest fight over and his greatest victory won, to answer the roll call in heaven."

Bellevue Baptist is not insensitive to the opinions people may have concerning it, but it knows that the final judgment on its success as a church will be rendered by God and not by men. So it is marshaling its witnesses. Among them are not many great and not many mighty, but a host of ordinary people saved by extraordinary grace.

V. First Methodist Church Orlando, Florida

ONLY ONE who travels widely, perceptively and not too swiftly can begin to appreciate how rapidly this country is developing its immense and goodly heritage. The old frontier disappeared two generations ago, but new frontiers are being opened at the edges of every metropolitan center and in almost every state. Some of the most remarkable development is occurring in small cities.

Without quite realizing it, the United States is now in the midst of a period of extraordinary interior expansion. Not only is our population increasing more rapidly than anybody expected a decade ago, but it is shifting about within our borders. It is also changing inwardly as the proportion of older people increases. Boom times are causing millions of new homes, workshops and facilities for better living to spring up. The face of the nation is being lifted.

Are the Churches Holding Their Own?

Is the church life of America keeping pace? This is not the place to attempt to give a general answer to that question. But the First Methodist Church of Orlando, Florida, is answering for itself. If other churches in areas of rapid development are doing as well, American Protestantism is still endowed with enough of the pioneer's vigor and initiative to hold its own and to possess the land.

In The Christian Century poll of November 1949, American ministers nominated for study in each quarter of the country a church in a city of less than 100,000 population. Churches in larger cities and in villages and open country were also nominated. For the middle-sized city in the southeast part of the country, these ministers named as the church most deserving of study the First Methodist Church of Orlando. So an editor of The Christian Century visited Orlando in March for several days. Arriving without prior announcement of his visit or its purpose, he saw the church in normal pre-Easter circumstances.

The plant of the First Methodist Church is a conspicuous feature of the downtown architecture of this mid-Florida city. Its most impressive structure is a large modern building for religious education. The four stories, faced with light brick, house a church school which has an average attendance of around a thousand. It also accommodates the other activities of a seven-day-a-week parish. Dominating the front of the building is a huge window, illuminated from

an interior court. In stained glass it shows the figure of Jesus Christ above those Methodist saints, John Wesley and Francis Asbury. On the corner, comfortably shaded by royal palms and other trees until the not distant day when it is to be replaced by a more adequate sanctuary, is the Akron-type church auditorium whose 1,400 seat capacity is filled to overflowing at three services every Sunday. Buildings and equipment are valued at \$400,000. Unfortunately an earlier generation did not anticipate future expansion, so today church buildings are crowded by business structures.

But it is not bricks and mortar which distinguish this church. First Church, as it is called in Orlando, is remarkable for four elements, held in dynamic unity by the virility of its denominational loyalty. These are the depth of its missionary concern, the vigor of its educational program, the strength of its evangelistic emphasis and the power of its attraction for thousands of winter visitors. These interests are served by an unusually effective staff of eleven people. First Church is evangelically liberal and community minded. It is progressive and friendly, adaptable and ecumenical. It is happily and harmoniously busy. While it conforms without visible difficulty to the standards of the region in which it serves, it is recognized to be dissatisfied with some of these standards and to be trying to raise them. It is one of the most cosmopolitan congregations to be found outside the large cities. In its membership one finds a cross-section of the Christians of America's majority race.

In the Center of Florida

Like other churches, this one cannot be understood out of relation to its city. Orlando lies close to the center of Florida. The Chamber of Commerce estimates that it now has around 65,000 people. Whether or not this figure is accurate, Orlando is the largest inland city in the state. It is the marketing and business center for an area with about 300,000 population. It attracts annually about 25,000 of the kind of winter visitors who seek a quiet place in which to spend the entire season. Hence it is not overrun with the gaudy and often questionable enterprises which elsewhere in Florida raucously compete for the transient's dollar.

The First Methodist Church of Orlando, Florida, was chosen in The Christian Century's poll of 100,000 ministers as the church most worthy of study in a medium-sized city in the southeast quarter of the country. This included the following states: Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Florida. Other churches in cities of less than 100,000 in this part of the country which were frequently voted for were First Presbyterian, Charlestown, West Virginia; Central Christian, Lexington, Kentucky and Munsey Memorial Methodist, Johnson City, Tennessee.

Within its city limits, Orlando has more than 30 lakes. Near the business district is Lake Eola, whose shores have been landscaped to form a lovely civic centerpiece. Orlando's business center shows what happens when a city begins

to grow rapidly, with too little planning, and that too timid and too late. But its residence area, with thousands of lovely homes, large and small, fronting on the lakes, is among the most beautiful to be found anywhere.

The economic base of the Orlando region of the First Methodist Church rests on two main supports. One is the climate of central Florida, which draws large numbers of visitors, many of whom become permanent residents. Orlando's average winter temperature is 68 degrees and in summer the average rises less than a dozen degrees above that. It has 45 inches of rainfall a year. That is sufficient to grow semi-tropical flora of all sorts, but is not so heavy as to cut off the kindly sunshine which is one of the state's biggest attractions.

The second main economic support is the prosperous citrus industry. The *Wall Street Journal* estimates that this year Florida orange growers will have a gross return "close to \$125 million" as against \$77 million a year ago and \$42 million the year before. Orlando is the financial, marketing, wholesale and retail center of the Florida citrus belt. The state trumpets the claim that it has now passed California as a citrus producer. In the five counties immediately around Orlando, a 1946 survey estimated that 5,000 persons are required to take care of the groves, 7,000 are employed seven months of the year packing citrus fruits, 2,000 are engaged during the season in picking and 3,500 work in the canneries. This is about half of the available labor force. The remainder are employed in producing vegetable crops, in wholesale and retail business, in service trades, in the professions and in raising cattle, which has recently become a \$100 million industry in Florida.

Steady Expansion

First Church, which was started in 1858, is the oldest of nine Methodist churches in Orlando. Several of these grew out of old First. The church has 3,605 members, of whom about 3,205 are listed as "active." In 1920 membership was 886. The congregation had a net gain of approximately 400 active members in the next decade, 800 in the thirties and 1,000 in the forties. So its growth has been steady. It has not been as rapid proportionately as the development of the city, but if one takes into account the new congregations the church has helped to establish, First Church has more than kept pace. It has maintained this under the leadership of several ministers, although the ministries of John Branscomb, the present pastor, and of A. Fred Turner, his predecessor, cover the past fifteen years.

Last year the church doubled the space available for the church school, so it raised more money than usual. The record of \$183,386 for the year includes \$107,000 cash paid out for buildings, on which only a small debt remains. But even under these circumstances the church contributed more than \$32,000 for missions and benevolences outside the congregation. Such giving indicates that the congregation takes seriously the missionary work of the denomination and backs up its reputation for world-mindedness with more than words. During the past three years the church has given annually \$25,000 or more to missions.

Before considering the characteristics which entitle this church to be enrolled among the great American churches, the point must be made that it is first of all and distinctively

a Methodist church. Denominational loyalty is deeply ingrained in its life. Its missionary, educational and evangelistic activity, its pastoral ministry and its community service are closely integrated into the highly organized processes of the nation's largest denomination. Whether this is good or bad will not be debated here, but it must be understood as the background of all that follows. This is not to say that the relations of this congregation with churches of other denominations are strained. On the contrary, they are cordial. First Methodist takes pride in its participation in the ecumenical movement, but this participation derives from the fact that the Methodist demonstration is a part of that movement.

Missions Minded

It is appropriate that the home church of John R. Mott should make Christian missions a major interest. The local board to which this cause is committed is headed by B. R. Barber, secretary for 36 years to Dr. Mott and father-in-law of Representative Walter Judd of Minnesota, who spent many years as a missionary doctor in China. Mr. Barber's board consists of 16 persons who are connected with various major groups in the church. They plan the systematic indoctrination of the church with missionary information. On the fourth Sunday of every month, which is "Missionary Sunday," they arrange to have three-minute speakers visit every class. Annually the church stages a "Hughlett Missionary Day" to raise money to support W. S. Hughlett, M.D., his family and their hospital in the Belgian Congo. This year \$2,800 was raised, in addition to a \$10,000 bequest given by a member of the church to build a clinic in the new Hughlett hospital. A few years ago the entire Hughlett family visited Orlando and helped celebrate their day. The church gave bicycles to the two girls and other gifts to the son and the parents, and piled a miniature replica of the hospital with offerings. Altogether this one church has provided about \$20,000 for the Hughlett ministry of healing.

A device which is particularly effective in making every member of the church feel personally responsible for some aspect of Methodist foreign work bears the unenlightening name of "missionary specials." For the benefit of non-Methodists, a special is anything costing money and having to do with missions for which an individual, group, class or church assumes responsibility. Usually it is a non-recurring item, accepted as a task "over and above" regular giving. At present each class, department and group in the Orlando church, in addition to many individuals, has assumed one of these projects. One class builds a chapel in the Congo. Another supports a native evangelist, whose name it knows and whose picture it often sees. Others provide scholarships for students in Christian schools in China, India and Cuba. The primary department last year collected \$250 for war orphans in China. The Juniors gave \$300 to Puerto Rican and African projects. So it goes through the whole church, which has specials in India, China, Africa, Japan, Europe, Cuba and the home missions work of the denomination in the United States. Money collected for these purposes goes to the "Advance Specials" treasurer of the Florida annual conference board of missions, who enters the amount in his books and passes it on to the Board of Missions and Church Extension of the

Methodist Church. The board agrees to forward the funds to their appointed goals.

All of this may sound complicated, but it humanizes denominational activities abroad and it loosens up dollars for missions. The matter is not simplified by the fact that in addition to a raft of specials First Methodist also accepts and pays from its regular budget an apportionment of \$7,000 for missionary and educational work. Its gifts for others during the Crusade for Christ program of the denomination immediately after the war ran as much as \$50,000 a year. It has given \$10,000 to the Methodist European relief program administered by Bishop Paul Garber in Geneva, \$5,000 to Soochow University in China, \$2,000 for work in Korea and "thousands of dollars" for the Methodist Committee on Overseas Relief.

The M.C.O.R. is responsible for the denomination's contributions to Church World Service, the general Protestant relief agency. Last year Methodist contributions to that agency fell to eighth among Protestant denominations. One reason was the complexity and inflexibility of this Methodist system of missionary specials. The system is geared to the denomination. Methodist participation in interchurch activities is not similarly personalized, and so it gets lost. The specials system was first developed by the southern Methodist church, and has been taken over by the united denomination since the merger.

A Link in the 'Florida Chain'

The missionary concern of this church, which finds its chief outlet in denominational enterprises, has its principal inspiration in a remarkable interchurch institution. This is the Florida Chain of Missionary Assemblies, which was started in Orlando 21 years ago. The "Chain" now includes 21 cities. Each year during the winter when the state is full of visitors from the north, the chain gang of the most eminent available missionary speakers tours these cities. Following the plan developed a generation ago by Chautauqua, the "Chain" circles the state with men and women who collectively represent the Christian world mission. First Methodist Church of Orlando frankly admits that it owes much to this enterprise. Bishop Paul Kern says that the marked missionary interest evident here and in other Florida churches is in considerable part attributable to the "Chain." Ralph E. Diffendorfer declares that the Florida Chain of Missionary Assemblies is the most effective institution for missionary promotion now at work in the nation.

This missions Chautauqua has a strong guiding hand. Miss Louise Woodford of St. Petersburg is its executive. This year speakers in the Orlando-Winter Park Assemblies included J. Hutchison Cockburn, former moderator of the Church of Scotland; Truman B. Douglass, president of the Home Missions Council of North America; Hugh C. Stuntz, president of Scarritt College, Nashville; T. Z. Koo of the World's Student Christian Federation; Norman W. Taylor, Presbyterian missionary of Mexico; Mrs. John Van Ess, Dutch Reformed educator in Arabia and John C. Smith, Presbyterian mission board secretary who was formerly in Japan. The principal Protestant churches of Orlando, without exception, encourage their people to attend these meetings. In 1950 the first assembly was held in Jacksonville beginning January 22 and the last at Punta

Gorda ending February 27. In 12 of the 23 cities, including Orlando, the principal meetings were held in Methodist churches.

Women for Missions

Missionary zeal at First Church, Orlando, is effectively put to work by the Woman's Society for Christian Service. It has a membership of 591 women, and is the largest organization of its kind in Florida. Its purpose, according to Mrs. F. B. Godfrey, the church's secretary for personnel and director of women's work, is to (1) build spiritual life in home and church, (2) educate women concerning what the church is and how and where it serves and (3) to work at extending its ministry. The society promotes *World Outlook*, the excellent missionary magazine of the denomination, so effectively that 160 subscriptions of this one paper go to Orlando First Church homes. (The church membership also reports 350 subscriptions to the *Christian Advocate*.) The W.C.C.S. recently invited women from both races to attend the World's Day of Prayer services in First Church. This was Orlando's first interracial meeting. It also sponsored an interracial class of over 200 women who studied the ecumenical church. It works to get women registered so they will vote in elections and is generally one of the most enlightened and effective influences in church and city.

Every Sunday morning from October to May, Dr. and Mrs. John R. Mott can be seen occupying a pew well toward the front in Orlando's First Methodist Church. The church has two morning services. They attend the later service, and have to arrive a half hour early to get their favorite seat. Dr. and Mrs. Mott go to Canada in the summer, but Orlando is their home during the rest of the year. Dr. Mott declares, according to a local report, that when he saw old age approaching he looked the world over to locate its most beautiful and salubrious spot for retirement and decided on Orlando. His home is on Lake Eola near the center of town and only a few blocks from the church. Dr. Mott's 85th birthday comes on May 25, 1950. Mrs. Mott is a few years younger. On sunny days (Orlando has a few of the other kind) he is often seen pushing a wheel chair carrying his wife around the walk circling the lake and stopping frequently to chat with neighbors.

John R. Mott at Home

To the rest of mankind Dr. Mott may be an almost legendary figure, remote and austere in his eminence as a world Christian leader. But to members of his home church in Orlando, he is warmly human and always approachable. He preaches in First Methodist Church each New Year Sunday, always to overflowing crowds. He is greatly interested in his church, is a generous contributor to its work and a firm supporter of its pastor. On the night before he went abroad in 1947 to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, he and Mrs. Mott went around to the parsonage and visited for two hours. He has given to the church and to each of its ministers the six-volume set of his collected papers. When Mrs. Mott is unable to attend church, Dr. Mott sits in the balcony. Generally he takes notes. When the pastor asked him why, he said he had "made it the practice of a lifetime to take notes. When a man says

something good, I've got it. If not, I have kept busy. I have not wasted my time."

Dr. Mott is interested in Hungerford, a Negro school at Orlando which is having a difficult time to raise enough money to keep its doors open. Some time ago he heard that the school was having a program to secure funds, and he and Mrs. Mott attended. When the collection plate was passed, Dr. Mott's cheque was dropped in. It turned out that that cheque was the largest gift received that day, and it caused some excitement. The teller did not recognize the signature, and being of a somewhat skeptical turn of mind, he instituted inquiries, not too cautiously, to learn whether Dr. Mott was "good" for the amount of his contribution. Dr. Mott still breaks into laughter when he recalls the incident, which did not at all discourage his interest in the school. This man who has raised over \$300 million for humanitarian causes serves on a committee to help Hungerford.

When The Christian Century asked Dr. Mott about his opinions concerning First Church, he did not hesitate. It is, he said, the most American church he knows. It perfectly blends northern and southern life; eastern and western as well. He has spoken in most of the great churches in America, and he has seen nothing to equal this church. Here one finds the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, the professions and the crafts. Church life is carried on a high level. People are aware of the great issues of the Christian faith and the world in which they must make their influence felt. The church is progressive and is quickly responsive to new programs. This is also, he said, a symmetrical church. It has a strong missionary concern, but it is evangelistic and is interested in social issues. Its minister, he pointed out, is able to help the church elsewhere because he multiplies his hands through having capable assistants. Dr. Mott recalled a favorite quotation from Lord Morley, to the effect that it is less important to do work than it is to release other people to do it.

Church School and Evangelism

Recently First Methodist Church had to make a difficult decision. It needed both a more commodious house for worship and more room for its Sunday school, and it could hardly hope to raise money for both at one time. Which should it choose? The fact that it chose to double the accommodations for its church school tells a good deal about the church. The enlarged building was finished last year. First Church's Sunday school is a vital element in its life. Over half of the thousand people who attend on an average Sunday are adults. Their organizations perpetuate the good old idea of the Methodist class meeting. Each class cares for its members in sickness and in health. Each is a center of Christian fellowship. Each carries on a persistent campaign of evangelism and of personal service to people in need. Each is led by a church member who takes the assignment as a Christian vocation. Some of the best people in Orlando find in this church school an opportunity to render a significant Christian ministry.

A leading dentist, Dr. Paul C. Harrell, is the general superintendent. He has filled this post for twenty years. Under his supervision are 70 teachers and officers. The enrollment of the school includes 2,377 persons, of whom

1,260 are adults. Attendance last year averaged 996, which represents a big gain over 1944, when it was 675. For the thirty Sundays preceding May 1 of this year attendance averaged nearly 1,200. The figure for Easter was 1,861. A vacation church school enrolls 150 children. This big enterprise is carried on under a Board of Christian Education, whose chairman is Mrs. Edna Giles Fuller. Mrs. Fuller was the first woman member of the Florida legislature and once was chairman of the social service committee of the United Council of Church Women. Since serving in the legislature she has maintained a steady campaign for better facilities for religion at the state penitentiary at Raiford. This has recently borne fruit in the erection of a prison chapel. She teaches the "Volunteers," a class of women in First Church. Through this class and in other ways she labors hard to undermine the complacency which flourishes under the Florida sun and to get good people to become better by taking an interest in Christian service outside as well as inside the congregation.

Adult Bible Classes Important

Since adults comprise so large a proportion of the school, their large classes are an unusual and important feature of life at First Church. Most of the teachers lecture. Some have a question period following. The Wesley Bible class of older men come early each Sunday and sing gospel songs. They often hold midweek get-togethers at which they do their own cooking. In addition to missionary projects, classes carry on enterprises of help among their members and in the community. The business men's class led by George Shackleton, a retired farmer, has an average attendance of around 100, contributions averaging a dollar a man a week. An illustration of their work: A young man who wanted to attend was required to work on Sundays. Representatives of the class went to the man's employer. They asked him to permit his clerk to attend Sunday school and church. They also urged him to attend. Now both worker and boss are present every Sunday and the employer is one of the most substantial contributors in service and money to the work of First Church.

The children's and youth divisions of the church school, which enroll respectively 545 and 398, are carefully graded and carry on a well-planned routine of church service. Teachers of the junior, intermediate and senior ages have as a principal objective bringing all their charges to enlist their lives for Christ and the church. Beginning each February they work toward "decision day." Those who decide to do so are enrolled in a class which meets for five Saturdays to prepare them for church membership. They are taught the catechism, the basic beliefs of the Christian faith, the meaning of church membership. They learn Christian hymns, study the *Discipline* of the Methodist Church and the Bible. On Palm Sunday they are formally received as members of First Church.

An Annual Revival Meeting

Each February Orlando's First Church encourages what the pastor calls "the swarming habit in the church of the Lord" by holding a week's revival meeting. Great crowds attend to hear some noted speaker, such as Bishop Arthur J. Moore, Paul Hardin, Jr., Chester McPheeters, Clovis Chappel or Norman Vincent Peale, to name five who have

come in recent years. Often Homer Rodeheaver leads the music. This former associate of Billy Sunday has a 32,000 acre ranch in Florida. The church supplements mass evangelism with visitation evangelism during this week and at other times of the year. There are several "fishermen's clubs" in the church school and the board of stewards. Eight to ten men and women constitute each club. They meet for supper and go out two by two to call on prospective members.

First Church's Ministers

It has been with some difficulty that this account has progressed to this point without introducing the ministers and staff of First Church. The omission, if it is that, does not occur because they play a less significant part in the life of this Christian fellowship than do the ministers of other great churches. On the contrary, they are vitally related to everything that goes on in the church, as ministers, servants, helpers; not as overlords or domineering personalities. They work ceaselessly at the evangelistic task of the church, as well as in its pastoral ministry.

For the past six years the senior minister has been John Branscomb. Dr. Branscomb, who is 45, is slight, wiry and looks ten years younger. A stroll with him down the main street of Orlando is an unforgettable experience. He seems to know most of the people one meets on the sidewalk, half of those who pass in cars and everybody in the stores, offices and banks. This congenial pastor was born in Alabama. There were ten children in the family, and all of them graduated from college. John Branscomb attended Emory University in Georgia, winning a Ph.D. degree in 1926 and a B.D. in 1928. He joined the Florida conference of the Methodist Church in 1928 and held five pastorates before coming to Orlando First in 1944 from First Methodist Church, Tampa, where he had spent eight years. Florida Southern College bestowed the D.D. on him ten years ago.

A fluent and able preacher, Dr. Branscomb has held revival meetings in each of the Southern states east of the Mississippi. He often preaches at Methodist gatherings at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina and Ocean Grove, New Jersey. His most important denominational responsibility is as president of the board of missions of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the Methodist Church. He is also a member of the jurisdictional council. He has served as conference missionary secretary of the Florida conference since 1936. Dr. Branscomb's son is studying at Emory University, Oxford, Georgia, and his daughter attends junior college in Orlando. Mrs. Branscomb is also an Alabamian.

'Amen' Put to Frequent Use

John Branscomb, like some radio commentators, has a signature word. It is Amen! pronounced with a long, very positive A. He writes a weekly column in the Orlando *Sentinel Star* which he calls the "Amen Corner." He never hesitates to use the word when he desires to give emphatic assent to another's views or to underline his own. His peculiarity subjects him to much good natured railery among the men of the congregation and town. For example, when Branscomb is called on to say grace at Kiwanis, his good friends, Dr. Marshall Dendy, minister of the First Presbyterian Church, and Dean Melville John-

son of St. Luke's Episcopal, are likely to punctuate its conclusion with sonorous "Ah-mens." Dr. Branscomb with a straight face insists this pronunciation is effete and that every red-blooded 100 per cent Floridian should come straight out for the unabashed oldtime religion and a thundering Aaa-men!

The junior minister at First Church is Victor Rankin, graduate of Florida Southern College and Boston University School of Theology. Recently he volunteered for missionary work in the Caribbean area. His support has been undertaken for next year as another "missionary special" of First Church. He says the missionary interest of First Church finally helped him decide to enter foreign service. The teamwork between the ministers and all others on the staff is an inspiring thing to see. Instead of always holding the center of the stage himself, Dr. Branscomb speaks and thinks of himself as "one of the ministers of the church." He magnifies the status, work and achievements of his associates, who reciprocate with an unusual spirit of comradeship and loyalty. In addition to Mrs. Godfrey, who was formerly a national secretary of the Methodist missions board, the staff includes Miss Mary A. Hubbard, secretary, and Miss Mabel Viehman, assistant secretary; Mrs. Fred Reese, church hostess; Mrs. Jesse Pedrick Baker, a Juillard graduate who is choir director and organist; Mrs. Julia Campbell, director of youth and junior choirs, and Mrs. Robert Tharp, assistant organist. James Howard, chief caretaker, has been with the church twenty-five years.

In both Tampa and Orlando, Dr. Branscomb followed ministries of A. Fred Turner, of whom he always speaks with admiration and affection. This year at Easter, as on many other occasions, Dr. Turner returned to Orlando, where his son is an active member of First Church, and spoke at the evening service. His nine-year ministry at Orlando contributed to the strength of a growing church and added to its prestige in the community. Dr. Branscomb says Dr. Turner could be elected mayor of Orlando any time he chose to run.

Church Welcomes Visitors

Like many churches in Florida, Orlando First attracts large numbers of winter visitors. Generally these are older people who promptly identify themselves with the church, attend its services regularly and return year after year. They find it easier to fit into the life of First Church because it is an all-year, thriving concern and because it is friendly and cosmopolitan. They open the opportunity for a specialized ministry which can do great good. And they are a phenomenon in America's changing life important to the churches—the upswing in the age-curve.

During recent years the proportion of older people in the American population has risen, and the increase in savings, pensions and social security has permitted a larger number to retire from work. States with warmer climates, and churches in them, have especially benefited from this development, and will increasingly do so as the movement to provide pensions in industry accelerates. The number of people in the United States who were from 65 to 74 years old increased from 3.2 million in 1920 to 4.4 million in 1930 and 5.8 million in 1948. Estimates place the number at 7.5 million in 1950, 9.5 million in 1960 and 10.7 million in 1970. Now persons over 65 represent 7.9

per cent of the population. The proportion is expected to increase to 10.2 in 1960 and 11.9 ten years later.

A Ministry to the Elderly

As the description of its activities has shown, First Church is beginning to develop a ministry particularly adapted to older people, while at the same time it continues its strong program for younger families. That it might do much more would not be disputed by its lay or ministerial leadership. It is beginning to assemble a library which can be an asset in this direction. It has developed its ministry of music to a high level, presenting several concerts a year by its own or visiting choirs. More can be done through this medium. Crowded attendance at meetings of the Florida Chain of Missionary Assemblies suggests that other lectureships on a variety of subjects would be appreciated. Orlando needs indoor recreation centers as well as more parks. The church could take the former of these needs into account when it plans the next unit of its building program. Orlando already has a head start in attracting people who are more interested in cultural and religious advantages than they are in horse racing and night clubs, and its churches can help it increase this lead.

A higher proportion of older members than other churches have has advantages and raises problems. Older people have more time but less energy. They possess more money but spend it more carefully, which ought to redound to the advantage of the church. They use tested methods conscientiously but are less likely to experiment with new ways of doing things. Great numbers are prepared to make their church the center of life outside the family, but the church has to adapt its message and demands to their slower pace, their less rugged strength. Nevertheless it is not necessary to recall the feats of Grandma Moses to recognize that older people often possess great undiscovered creative ability. The churches which they love and in which they have confidence ought to take the lead in helping them more effectively than they are now doing. Here is a field of Christian pioneering in which the contribution of First Methodist and other Orlando churches can have nationwide significance.

Attitude on Social Issues

First Methodist Church is renowned as an enemy of the liquor traffic. Dr. Branscomb is aware that some church people are not as strict on the subject of cocktails as an earlier generation, but he does not hesitate to speak his mind forcibly in his sermons. The Orange County Temperance League, which has a budget of \$4,500 a year, has many members in the church and receives its public endorsement. The league recently sponsored the appearance in the community of Sam Morris, who uses Billy Sunday language and tactics in his exhortation of King Alcohol. His appearance in Orlando netted him a reported \$500, as well as something more for the league. A more personal approach to the problem is made by the vigorous local chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous, some of whose most effective workers are members of First Methodist.

On the issue of gambling, the picture is not quite as clear. The numbers racket is said to flourish in Orlando and Florida is a favorite haunt of gamblers of many kinds. When The Christian Century visited the state, Florida

was enjoying an attack of civic virtue. Lent had come and, more important, the tourist season was drawing to its close. So the welkin was ringing—as it does almost every year, come late March—with denunciations of organized gambling, which ordinarily continues with only the thinnest veils of concealment. On March 11 Governor Fuller Warren called upon sheriffs and constables and other officials to report "on the efforts of your office to enforce the law, particularly the law against gambling." Three weeks before he had ordered them to enforce the law, as though they were not sworn to do that when they took office. In Miami a farcical state probe was going through the motions of trying to learn how bookies manage to flash results of races throughout the nation in spite of Florida's anti-bookie wire service law. Meanwhile the state continues to profit hugely through pari-mutuel betting, its take being enhanced by an estimated \$500,000 a year through its own failure to stop illegal syndicates.

All this leaves Orlando churchmen in something of a daze. Their own community is clean by comparison with some other places, but they are disturbed by the knowledge that the state takes so complacent a view of defiance of its laws for so demoralizing a purpose. Some of them are becoming alarmed at the evidence that the gangsters who control illegal gambling have effected a nationwide organization and wonder whether this country is going to fall, as did Germany and Japan, into the hands of criminal elements. But what can they do, they ask. They don't know any gamblers. The thing is carried on secretly. It is almost impossible to get evidence which will convict in a court of law because those who know won't talk, and those whose consciences impel them to talk don't know.

Caution on Race Issue

Orange county, of which Orlando is the county seat, recently floated a \$6 million bond issue for the improvement of its schools. One-third of this will go to raise the standard of schools for Negroes, who constitute 15,000 of the estimated 65,000 population of Orlando. There is a privately financed housing development in Orlando for Negroes as well as some public housing. It is observed that every improvement in housing or other opportunities brings a commensurate response in the Negroes' concern for their surroundings.

First Church is making commendable progress toward more fully Christian relations between persons of different races, but its progress must be measured in terms of the slowly changing views of its own community, not of others. Relations between it and the churches attended by Negroes are reported to be thoroughly friendly. On the 1950 World Day of Prayer, church women of all races were invited to attend the community meeting in First Church. This was the first time this had occurred and it passed off without incident. Not as many Negro women attended as might have come, but that was understandable. A recent Council of Church Women's study class on the ecumenical church had 206 women of both races in attendance at two meetings. Owing to persistent work over many years by the Woman's Society of Christian Service here and throughout the denomination, the attitudes of Methodist women on most social questions involving the Christian

conscience is about a decade ahead of those of the men.

Many progressive southern churches are concerned over the Christian considerations of justice and humanity which are involved in the race issue. They are anxious to do what they can to better relations between Negroes and whites, and are slowly making progress. This was illustrated by a widely publicized incident which occurred in another Florida community in February. During Brotherhood Week, the Methodist denominational weekly, the *Christian Advocate*, carried a picture showing two small boys, Negro and white, reading a book together. When some members of one church saw this, they blew a fuse and stampeded an official board meeting into canceling orders for denominational literature. Later wiser counsels prevailed and the church resumed its former relationship to denominational publications. The incident, which has now been happily resolved, should not be magnified beyond its real significance, as it was by many newspapers, especially in the north, at the time it happened. But the episode revealed an area concerning which Florida churchmen are sensitive and with which many are attempting to deal in the light of the Christian faith.

Lives Are Changed

The main work of First Church, Orlando, goes on so casually as to seem almost incidental. Missionary cultivation goes forward with the routine of a well managed farm. Christian nurture is reduced to a system as undemonstrative and as effective as the diet kitchen of a hospital. Evangelism is as much a part of the day's work as are the calls of a friendly sales force. But in the interaction of these processes many lives are changed, momentous decisions are made.

During one hour while The Christian Century was studying First Church, Dr. Branscomb had three interviews. One was with a married woman who for three months had been living with a man other than her husband, whom she had left up north. Like Hosea, her husband was ready to forgive his unfaithful wife and had telephoned urging her to return. The pastor got her to agree to do so. To clinch the matter he persuaded her to call her husband without delay. Then followed a conference with a war widow and a divorced man who wanted to marry her. The marriage was arranged. The third interview was with a Catholic woman who had married a Methodist. She wanted to join a church. Would the pastor take her? He would, and immediately arranged to instruct her on the meaning of membership in the Methodist Church.

Laymen Evangelize, Too

But the minister is only one of the many people who work in building the Kingdom in this church. One member might be called a Sunday school evangelist. He invites

everybody he meets to come to this session and to stay in church. He has interested scores of persons, who have become good members of Orlando First. Another is a business man who has given thousands of dollars to the church and its missionary enterprises. Another very active member was an alcoholic for 20 years. During that time he made and lost two fortunes. Six years ago he became interested in the church, which directed him to Alcoholics Anonymous. Today he is one of the most vigorous workers for the church and for A.A. and has led many persons to Christ.

A fourth lay leader heads a vigorous business which has been built up by advertising. But in his church relations this Christian refuses to permit his left hand to know what his right hand does. He pays for the radio broadcasting of the morning service of First Church, and has done so for three years, with the stipulation that nobody be permitted to know who the donor is. On the same terms he supports missions and gives regularly and substantially to many worthy enterprises in church and community.

Impact on Community?

The influence of First Methodist Church in the Orlando community is said to be extensive, but it is not easy to pin down. It is most clearly evident in other Methodist churches, who look to this congregation and its leadership with pride and affection. Relations with churches of other denominations are sincerely friendly, but the spirit of co-operation has not yet risen to the point where the services of an organized council of churches, with full-time employed personnel serving the churches in areas of common concern, are felt to be necessary. City and denominational ministers' meetings take place regularly and First Methodist Church loyally contributes its share to these. Members of the church take a leading part in the active Orlando Chamber of Commerce and in moves for civic improvement, and the church emphasizes the duty of the Christian to be faithful in the discharge of his responsibilities as a citizen.

In conclusion, Orlando First Methodist stands among the great churches of America as an illustration of the contribution which the Methodist denomination is making to many thousands of communities in this country. This church, it must be emphasized, is first of all and distinctively a Methodist enterprise. It is the product of the Methodist missionary conviction and it now contributes its strength to that cause. Its entire vigorous ministry is intimately related to the systematically organized life of America's largest Protestant denomination. Its success serves as a reminder of the wisdom of ecumenical Christianity. It insists that progress toward Christian reunion must move in a direction which takes in, adds together and enhances the loyalties and concerns of each of the great evangelical traditions.

VI. Trinity Lutheran Church

Freistatt, Missouri

AS YOU TRAVEL along the paved highways and graveled byroads of southwest Missouri on a Sunday morning, you pass many an unpainted frame church, its windows boarded up, abandoned by the congregation which formerly worshiped there. You pass others around which a pitifully small group of cars is parked, their owners assembled for services conducted by a part-time minister from a distant town.

The picture becomes different, however, if you turn off Highway 166 at a point in Lawrence county 33 miles west of Springfield, and follow the black-top road leading south. Long before you reach the sign reading "Freistatt, Population 132," you are aware of streams of cars approaching from all directions, converging on the stately white church which dominates the rural landscape, its 80-foot spire reaching upward from a green, elm-shaded lawn bordered by a thick privet hedge. For a solid block on both sides of the wide street, cars are parked parallel to each other, backs to the curbs; others range down the graveled streets leading east and west between the neat, wide-spaced houses. In front of the church door a crowd of reverent, well dressed people wait patiently for the young ushers to find places for them in the crowded pews inside. By the time the sober, red-haired pastor in his black robe has taken his place in front of the simple white altar to begin the traditional Lutheran liturgy, every corner of the building is filled.

The Church Is the Community

This is Trinity Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod), which the Protestant ministers who took part in The Christian Century's poll on great churches of America named as the rural or small town congregation most deserving of study in the southwest quarter of the nation. In a period when the typical American rural church picture has been one of decline, Trinity Lutheran has grown and developed in vitality, until today it counts on its rolls 800 baptized members, 600 of them communicants—this in a village of 132 souls!

The key to this strength, one soon discovers, lies in the complete identification of the church with the community, and of the community with the church. It is impossible to find out where one leaves off and the other begins. A resident of Mount Vernon or Monett, the nearest trading centers lying eight miles north and south of the village, may refer to a farmer in the community as living "out

on German prairie"; the farmer himself says he is "in the church." All but one of the neat white farmhouses on the 80-to-100-acre tracts for some five miles to the east, south, west and north of the village, and every house in the village itself, are occupied by members of Trinity Lutheran Church, as are many of those in peripheral areas.

The German Background

The Freistatt community today is the fulfillment of the dreams of the first settlers. These were German immigrants who had found the winters in Minnesota, where they first made their homes, so forbidding that they took advantage of the Frisco railroad's offer to sell at \$6 an acre the Missouri land it had been granted by the government as an inducement to expand westward. They arrived at Christmastime 1873—the Fritz and Schoen brothers and their families. Soon they had staked out homesteads on the sandy, brush-covered upland eight miles north of the railroad. On the way from Minnesota, they had paused in St. Louis long enough to negotiate at Missouri Synod headquarters for a pastor to come as soon as they could erect a church. Hardly were their first rude shelters up when they were being visited by a *Reiseprediger*—traveling pastor—who conducted religious services in their homes and administered the sacraments. By the following September they had organized a regular congregation. The next April found them with a church building, a resident pastor and a parish school.

From Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Wisconsin, and particularly Illinois, other restless German immigrants, hearing that in southwest Missouri a "real" Lutheran community was growing, poured in to take over the farmland on all sides of the tracts purchased by the firstcomers.

From the beginning, the aim was to establish a cohesive community of like-minded, God-fearing souls who would govern their every action by the word of God as Missouri Synod Lutherans believe it has been spoken through the Bible. When a son was ready to marry, his father looked about for a piece of land on the outskirts of the community, then offered such a high price for it that the non-Lutheran owner was glad to turn it over to the younger Lutherans.

Trinity Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) of Freistatt, Missouri, was chosen in The Christian Century's poll of 100,000 ministers as the rural or small town church most worthy of study in the southwest quarter of the nation. This included the states of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, Arkansas and Louisiana. Other southwest area churches in this category which were frequently voted for were two in Kansas—First Methodist in Baldwin and Zion Methodist in Robinson.

Today, few sons and daughters of Freistatt leave to seek work or homes elsewhere. Those who do not wish to farm obtain jobs in the neighboring towns, but most of them continue to live in the community. If they do establish homes near their work, they try to come back for church

services; if this is impossible, they take care that their new homes are near another "real Lutheran church." For the most part, they marry within the community. Aufdembrink, Fritz, Kleiboeker, Krueger, Osterloh, Schoen—such names make up the bulk of subscribers to Freistatt's mutually owned telephone exchange. In the few cases when young people have married "outside," they have invariably brought their partners into Trinity Lutheran membership. The number who have left the Missouri Synod fold is infinitesimal. Young Freistatters express amazement that anyone should be surprised at their unwavering loyalty to their faith; they have found their relationship to their church such a vital one that they can envision no other rewarding way of life.

Why Has This Church Flourished?

Here, then, is another rural church whose influence, like that of the New Knoxville, Ohio, Evangelical and Reformed Church described in the second of The Christian Century's studies of great American churches, but to an even greater extent, is based primarily on its rootage in a community whose ethnic oneness has set it apart from the area round about. Is one to conclude that rural Protestant churches flourish persistently only in such ground? Will this separateness, in the presence of the greater interrelation which today's living demands, continue to be a source of health? Can other rural churches, made up of people of diverse backgrounds and interests, hope to hold their people, to influence their daily lives, as do these churches which depend for a great part of their strength on the common ethnic heritage of their membership? Why have such churches as Trinity Lutheran, such communities as Freistatt, persisted along the original pattern while others, similarly established, have disintegrated? Is it the church, or the community, which holds the key to that persistence?

For members of Trinity Lutheran, there is a quick answer to the last question: "Our church." And, as a corollary, "Our Christian day school." All that the community is, they unanimously agree, the church has created. When people are loyal to their faith as they are, rest their decisions invariably on what their church teaches them is God's word as revealed in the Bible, the community of which they are a part cannot help being as nearly an ideal place to live as man can make it. Time and again, in conversation, these people bring in as illustration: "The Bible says . . ." Explains a successful farmer, highly respected as a leader throughout the county: "If you have a knowledge of the Bible so complete you can always refer to it for help in deciding what to do, you can handle any situation you meet."

Through the years, Trinity Lutheran has established daughter churches in eight other towns and cities of southwest Missouri. All but the one in Aurora, which is still maintained on a mission basis, have grown up to be flourishing, self-supporting congregations. This "mother" relationship typifies, in a way, Trinity's own function for her flock of 800. "I owe everything to my church" is no idle statement when uttered by a Freistatt farmer. "My church gives me a center around which to build my whole life," explains an insurance salesman whose work takes him far afield but who sacrifices advancement to be able to keep his home in the village. "When I meet people today who are confused

by the times, uncertain of themselves and what they believe, I thank God for what I have been given."

The faith which so permeates the lives and deeds of the people of Freistatt is based solidly on the doctrines of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Probably no other of that communion's 5,572 congregations has remained more loyal in its strict adherence to the principles enunciated by those founders in Saxony who refused to countenance what they considered adulteration of the Scriptures by the state church leadership and sailed from Germany in 1838 to re-establish "true Lutheranism" in a land where religious freedom was guaranteed.

The confession of faith those founders signed in their "emigration resolutions" is a key to the doctrines to which members of Trinity Lutheran subscribe today: "All the undersigned . . . confess themselves to be adherents of the pure Lutheran faith as contained in the word of God of the Old and New Testaments and set forth and confessed in the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church. They adhere to these confessions in their entirety without any additions; they confess these writings in their simple, literal sense . . ." Ask any member of Trinity Lutheran what he considers the essential point of his church's doctrine, and he will probably explain that it is the insistence on belief in the Bible as the unadulterated word of God, in the sacraments as true covenants, not symbols. He will add that he holds others entitled to their own beliefs—"Heaven would be a lonely place if only Lutherans were there," a Freistatt businessman admits.

Trinity Lutheran Church represents the flowering of the Missouri Synod's insistence on keeping to the purity of its faith, holding to the letter of its doctrines as it understands them, resisting every step toward cooperation with other churches which it fears might lead to some compromise of principles. Its members' forebears were among those Germans who, though living in widely scattered parts of the United States, read in *Der Lutheraner* C. F. W. Walther's stirring call to reform and in 1847 came together to form the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States.

Faith Issuing in Deeds

The firm grounding of character in the faith begins for the member of Trinity Lutheran when at the age of approximately 10 days he is carried up to the altar for baptism. It goes on through regular attendance at worship services during his childhood, through the eight years he spends at the parish school, culminating in his confirmation. It is strengthened through Bible study all his adult life, through the service he renders in the various channels Trinity Lutheran opens to him, and continues up to the day when he is laid to rest in the graveyard behind the church, where the community's dead lie side by side, not in family plots.

People round about marvel at how deeply religion motivates all that the people of Freistatt are, all that they do. "No one has ever lost a cent in a transaction out there," says a Monett bank executive. Merchants are unanimous in declaring that they would rather do business with people of the Freistatt community than with anyone else. Two circuit judges testify that in all their period of service in the area (17 and 20 years respectively), they

have never had a case from the Freistatt community on their dockets. There has been only one divorce, and that was many years ago. ("We could have prevented it, too, if we had been alert," a member of the church laments.) There have been no arrests; the village has never even bothered to appoint a town marshal. No one is ever permitted to suffer need or want. If a farmer is financially embarrassed, his neighbors help him. There has never been in the community a family on public relief, but this year one person is said to be receiving an old age pension.

The residents of the surrounding communities are eager to make strangers understand how deeply they feel that Freistatt, by its example, is an asset for all the area. "Since good things are contagious, these people wield a tremendous influence," points out the manager of an electric co-operative to which many of the farmers belong. When Trinity Lutheran celebrated its 75th anniversary last September, the *Monett Times* got out a 25-page supplement in honor of the event. A recurring theme in the dozens of display ads which Monett merchants sponsored in that edition ran like this: "It is the church which makes Freistatt great; its strength and progress have become a symbol for all communities to follow."

Separateness Brings Misunderstanding

However, because the people of Freistatt do not associate with their neighbors in any way so far as church or social affairs are concerned, they pay the penalty of being misunderstood in many particulars. Their neighbors have a high regard for their integrity, admire the type of character that emerges from their training and their traditions. But many of them hold erroneous conceptions of what life in Freistatt is like that would be dissipated if closer acquaintance were encouraged. Some in the near-by towns are not quite sure that the Freistatters are loyal Americans, although the fact that the community sent 20 young men to World War I and 63 to the more recent conflict has mitigated such criticism appreciably. Sometimes these neighboring Missourians will assert that "you can hardly understand some of the people out there," although the truth is that a noticeable Teutonic accent is hard to find. Some people in towns only a few miles away insist that the Christian day school in Freistatt is conducted in German. As a matter of fact, German is not even offered as an elective, and no regular classes have been taught in that language since World War I.

This feeling that there is something exotic about the community persists in spite of the fact that its people are almost a century removed from Germany. After the recent war, when members of the church decided to send relief packages abroad, there was no one with ties close enough to Germany to be able to offer a single address of a possible recipient; prospects had to be obtained from Lutheran World Relief headquarters. In this respect, Freistatt differs from New Knoxville, where the ties with Germany have been kept close and creative. Yet Freistatt has probably remained a more self-contained, separate community than has the Ohio town. The reason, it would seem, lies in the closer hold the church exerts on its people, from birth to death.

In activities other than those connected with its church or social life, Freistatt does not live to itself. Community

leaders are always to be found on county committees for such enterprises as the Red Cross, war bond drives, campaigns for crippled children's and infantile paralysis funds and the like. When Lawrence county celebrated its centennial in 1947, the editor who headed the observance says, the Freistatt representatives on his committee worked harder and more loyally than anyone else. "You never need to worry about the success of drives out there," county leaders tell you. Some of the men belong to Rotary clubs round about, and find the association rewarding.

Today the Freistatt community has one of the top Farm Bureau units in the entire area. True, this was not always so. Farm Bureau officials tell you that the Freistatt farmers had to be "sold" on the idea slowly, to be convinced that it would be good for all the people in the community, above all that it would not interfere with church affairs. The young people have an active 4-H unit. Here again the idea was a long time taking hold; it went against the Freistatt tradition that the father of the family was best fitted to teach his sons how to till the ancestral soil. Now the young people take part in county and regional 4-H enterprises, and their club ranks as one of the best. Freistatt, too, has a thriving cell in the Better Farming Association, a planning organization which is rapidly taking hold among the more successful farming communities in the state. There is as yet no interest among the women of the community in Home Bureau activities, which occupy the spare time of most rural American women.

The men of Freistatt see no peril for their ideal community in this emergence from the isolation in which their grandfathers lived to participate in the broader activities round about them. They see it rather as a necessity, a means to make the community a better place to live in, of insuring that it will be economically strong enough to provide for and thus hold the Freistatters who will come after them.

An Economy Transformed

The soundness of this line of reasoning has been demonstrated in the economic transformation that has taken place in Freistatt, and in all the area of which it is a part, in the past 30 years. In the twenties, the soil had been depleted; the future was uncertain. Lawrence county lies at the eastern terminal of the Great Plains. It is really a high plateau, higher even than the Ozark mountains, into which the rolling upland plunges downward a scant 30 miles to the south. The soil is shallow, rather sandy, unsuited to intensive growing of such depleting crops as the corn and wheat to which it had been planted since it was cleared by the early pioneers.

When they saw that their practices were bringing ruin, the "small farmers" who occupied the area set out to do something about it, with the help of agricultural experts. In 1926 the Carnation Milk Company built a plant at Mount Vernon and introduced dairy cows to the region. Today the plant is the largest single processor of evaporated milk in the world. The new type of farming took hold slowly, but it took. Last year the Missouri Farmers' Association, a limited form of cooperative, put in a powdered milk plant at Monett which has a daily capacity of 200,000 pounds. In recent years other milk processors have established stations in the area. Their trucks rove the country-

side, picking up the milk cans from beside the mailboxes. Today the area within a 75-mile radius of Springfield is described as the greatest dairy region of that size in the nation, and the claim has not been disputed.

With the opening of these new market opportunities, the countryside has been transformed. The change-over to such soil-building crops as clover, barley and alfalfa has built up the land. The number of dairy cows in Lawrence county alone rose from 16,700 in the 1942-44 period to 20,800 in 1948. So far most of the stock is graded, not purebred, but it is well cared for and its production record is felt to be satisfactory.

Good Farming Shows

The Freistatt area farms show the wisdom their owners exhibited when they decided to go along with their neighbors in initiating a new base for their operations. They are better kept, more prosperous-looking than most others in the vicinity. Not a single homestead looks run down, not a house needs paint. The fields are well tilled, the hedge and fence rows clean, the constantly erupting rocks which testify to the basic unfriendliness of the soil evenly piled in the shallow gullies to prevent erosion.

County Agent Roy Graham estimates that the average Freistatt farmer has \$10,000 invested in the latest types of machinery. This is higher than the average for the area. Since 1926 the village and some of the near-by farms have had electric power furnished by the Empire District Electric Company. But it was with the coming of the Ozark Electric Cooperative (REA) that power really reached the outlying farms where it was needed. Now, it is estimated, around 95 per cent of the Freistatt homesteads are electrically equipped, with indoor plumbing and the latest in household labor-saving devices ("even dishwashers!" marvels a neighboring housewife).

Everywhere in the community are signs of prosperity, but not of parsimony. Ninety-nine-plus per cent of the farms are operator-owned. It is characteristic of Freistatt's insistence on family enterprise that strawberry production, which flourishes in the next tier of counties to the southwest, has never gained a foothold here. The Freistatt people do not like to think of having to hire migrant labor; they are content with the area's present population ratio of 99 per cent native-born white. Among the cars parked for Sunday morning services prewar models are conspicuous by their rarity. U.S. department of commerce "buying potential" estimates place the Lawrence county farm income per family (over and above home-produced-and-consumed commodities) at \$3,493; again, the Freistatt figure is rated locally to be higher than the county average.

The village itself has two general stores (one operated by descendants of the man who founded it in 1884), four garages or filling stations, a feed store, an ultra-modern food locker, the frame building which houses the Farmers Mutual Insurance Company founded by church leaders in the eighties, and a beautifully equipped job-printing shop.

Sunday morning services in the old white church follow the traditional Lutheran liturgy. The confessions, the introits, the creed are sung or recited with energy and meaning by people who have done so since infancy. There are no lagging periods, no hesitations. You cannot avoid the impression that every single person in the congregation

believes firmly every word he utters, is proud to be heard, gains a real strength and personal fulfillment from his participation. The youthful choir, directed just now by the pastor in the absence of a school principal who usually performs this duty, is excellently trained.

The sermon is an integral part of the service. Pastor W. J. Stelling speaks forcefully and confidently, centering on biblical exposition and doctrine. On Easter Sunday, when The Christian Century representative first became acquainted with the Freistatt community, he appealed to parents to tell again and again to their children the message of the risen Christ, that they might thereby gain an armor to protect them from temptation. In many churches, he reminded his audience, people on this morning were being told that the risen Christ is only symbolic. But those who, like the children in Freistatt's parochial school, have been taught that the Bible is the true word of the living God, have a faith that will carry them through all life's difficulties, a faith that cannot die.

The congregation hangs on Pastor Stelling's every word. Sharing in the listening, you realize that these people come to the end of the service confirmed in their faith, confident that if they do God's will they will have nothing to fear, determined to remain loyal in all that they do. The spirit of confidence that comes from the service is hard to define, but it is there. You understand better why few members of this congregation have ever left the fold.

"People today want certainty," Pastor Stelling explains. "Our church, with its reliance on the Bible as the final authority, and its faith in the triune God, gives them that. The answers are all in the Book, if we will only let it speak to us."

Services in English and German

The Sunday morning worship services are attended, on an average, by about 480 persons; special services, of which there are many, since the church calendar is closely followed, attract capacity crowds of 600. Twice a month, a special German-language service precedes the regular one in English. This is for the benefit of older members of the congregation who, although none of them were born in Germany, first heard the Bible read and the services conducted in German and have a nostalgic desire to have the practice continued. Young members of the church have at least a working knowledge of the tongue of their ancestors.

Communion is celebrated twice a month—one service in English, one in German—as a part of the regular worship service. Members wishing to take communion notify the pastor by the preceding evening of their intention. For at least one member of the congregation with whom The Christian Century representative talked—a young man who grew up in another branch of Protestantism but was confirmed in the Freistatt church after his marriage—this practice, encouraging as it does a period of personal preparation before communion, is a symbol of "how much deeper this kind of religion goes" than anything he had known before. "I wish I'd had it to help me out years earlier," he says.

The affairs of Trinity Lutheran Church are handled by various boards and committees elected by the "voting members" of the congregation, of whom there are at present 215. Every young man, if he wishes to do so, becomes a

"voting member" on reaching the age of 21. The board of elders, consisting of three men elected to one three-year term and eligible for re-election to another, has one of the most important functions. It works with the pastor on "conduct of services" and on matters of discipline. The latter duty is important in such a community as Freistatt. If there are family or community quarrels, the elders and the pastor confer with the principals and try to mediate the difficulty. If a member of the congregation is not living up to the requirements of the faith, it is the duty of the elders to bring him back to "the path of the right." In the few instances in which the elders are not able to lead the erring member aright, he is brought up before the entire voting assembly. No one seems to be quite sure how many times this has happened, but everyone agrees that in not more than a half-dozen instances has the final step of severing membership been taken.

The voting members elect a three-member board of trustees for a similar period of service to care for the physical properties of the church, and a board of Christian education to supervise the parochial school. These boards, plus a finance committee and such others as may be needed from time to time, constitute the church council which meets quarterly, or more often if emergencies arise. The voting assembly, too, meets quarterly, immediately following the council's session. In all these activities, only men have a part; as in many other congregations, women play a vital role but are not heard—at least officially.

A 'Worthy' Building the Aim

Just now the Trinity Lutheran congregation is busily engaged in assembling funds for a new stone building to replace the 120 by 36 foot frame structure which has served it since 1883. An eight-member committee directs the effort, in which \$90,000 toward a \$200,000 goal has already been collected and invested in bonds. At the special anniversary celebration last year \$15,000 was contributed. The people of Freistatt express only the slightest regret that the beautifully proportioned, gleaming white church which has served them so long is to be no more. With the passing of years, they point out, it has become harder and harder to keep the building in repair. Besides, they feel it not quite right that their church should be housed in a second-rate structure while they themselves live in modern, weather-tight houses. The congregation is determined that the new stone edifice shall be worthy of its function, as substantial and beautiful as they can make it. If a basement cannot be worked effectively into the plans, a separate parish house will be built to complement the modern stone parsonage erected next door to the church a few years ago. In this ambitious task, as in all else they undertake, the people of Trinity are united and confident.

Last year, in addition to setting aside \$21,360 for the building fund, Freistatters expended \$22,403, of which \$14,261 went for upkeep of the church and school and for salaries; \$8,142 for Lutheran missions and benevolences. All together, members of the congregation contributed \$50,035, which works out to around \$83.39 for each confirmed member. There are no special appeals for funds; the weekly envelope system prevails. In the annual report the name of each man, woman and child appears, followed by the amount he has contributed and a breakdown of the

purposes for which it has been designated on the envelopes. Does this method cause any jealousies or hard feelings? "No," say Freistatters. "We know each person gives according to his ability, the exact amount he is able to spare. Why should anyone object to making public what he feels he can give to the Lord?"

The Christian Day School

Closely tied into every phase of the church's life is its Christian day school. It is regarded by every member as the key to the church's continued strength in spite of the growing relations the community has developed with the outside world. Today it is housed in a modern brick building, with classrooms and offices upstairs and an assembly room with stage and well equipped kitchen in the basement. In the rear is a wooded park with permanent stands and picnic facilities. The school offers its 90 pupils the standard state-approved elementary curriculum, plus an hour of Bible study each morning and a closing service of prayer and hymn. The seventh and eighth grade Bible course, which the pastor teaches, consists of a survey of religion in general. When pupils graduate from the school, they are firmly grounded not only in the Bible but in Lutheran doctrine and tradition, and are ready for confirmation. For children of members who live too far away to attend the parish school, the pastor conducts special confirmation classes on Saturdays.

The school employs a principal and another full-time teacher, both with A.B. degrees, and a part-time assistant. Last year, because of the current shortage of parochial school teachers, Pastor Stelling had to double as principal, teacher and choir director. The part-time teacher also serves as parish worker, her duties being mainly those of pastor's secretary. For the coming year, the church will have on hand not only a new principal but also a "vicar," a third-year student at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, who will take over some of the preaching and pastoral duties and also serve as a second part-time teacher. In addition to salaries, the church provides its pastor and principal with homes and utilities.

The school costs the people of Trinity Lutheran about \$6,000 a year, but they assure you that they would be willing to spend far more than that to insure its continuation. They point out that although a public school in the community would be attended by no other pupils than the children of members, Bible study would have to be omitted. And that would be unthinkable.

No State Aid Wanted!

Every Freistatter is emphatically opposed to public aid for parochial schools. The school pays for the state-approved textbooks the pupils use. It also pays full fares to the neighboring high school districts whose buses, on their regular routes, bring some of the parochial students to Freistatt. However, it does participate in the federal hot lunch program, feeling that this is a grant not to the school but to the children.

The community is more fortunate than many others which have a thriving parochial school but must also keep up a public elementary school. Formerly the community did support such a school, but around 1941, when it had only two or three pupils, the county superintendent re-

requested that it be discontinued and the teacher released to help ease the shortage of rural school teachers. There is a public school district organization in Freistatt, however, and a 20-mill tax is levied to pay the tuition of the young people who attend public high schools in the towns round about. Some go to Monett, some to Verona, some to Pierce City, some to Mount Vernon, depending on which bus routes pass their homes. The district also pays the tuition in a neighboring town of the one pupil within its bounds whose parents, while of German ancestry, belong to an Evangelical and Reformed church and so don't want their child in a Missouri Lutheran parochial school.

Training for Leadership

People in the towns where the young Freistatters go as high school students are unanimous in praising their quality and valuing their contribution. Says one principal: "They have such high standards, both in scholarship and character, that our folks simply have to strive harder to match their efforts. The quality of our whole student body is lifted by their leavening effect."

In almost every class they enter, these parish school graduates become officers and honor students. For the past four years, at least one of the two highest-ranking graduates of Mount Vernon high school has hailed from Freistatt. This record is attributed in part to the excellent training they have received in a unique organization in the parish school known as the Young Lutheran League, which exists not only for "training in Christian conduct and development of interest in missions" but as an opportunity for its members to learn how to carry on parliamentary sessions, arrive at group decisions, sponsor projects, raise money and keep records.

Trinity Lutheran Church provides so many outlets for the energies of its members that they have time for few other activities after their day's work is done. Every evening, lights are on in the basement assembly room of the school, where all activities except worship services are carried on. Regularly on Tuesday evenings the young people arrive there for choir practice. On Wednesdays they return for Walther League. The Ladies' Aid is busy Tuesday afternoons on the project of the hour. On Friday evenings adults come together for Bible study under the direction of the pastor. Any time left over is filled with special meetings, preparations for special projects, the routine of the regular committees and boards.

The Right Man for Freistatt

All activities in the community either spring from or are sponsored by the church. The men have a "commercial club" for community betterment and fellowship; it was initiated by church leaders and builds its program around what the church is doing or planning. The women's "get together" club is also closely allied with the church, although it is more of a social nature than the Ladies' Aid, and meets in members' homes. Even the movement for an American Legion post, organized in 1946, began in the church. The first project of the new Legion auxiliary is to be the purchase of new library books for the parish school.

Trinity Lutheran has a definite asset in Pastor W. J. Stelling. One is impressed at once with his modesty, his unassuming stand for what he believes, his willingness

nevertheless to look at all sides of a question. There is nothing of the grandstand player about him. When he came to Freistatt two years ago after a 20-year pastorate at Ellsworth, Kansas, some members of the church didn't quite know how to take his practice of letting everyone help make decisions. One of the leaders explains that they weren't used to having a pastor sit by while others expressed their opinions. "But he is always clear in letting us know what he does think," he says. "We know that he would be willing to sacrifice everything for us. Look how he's been overworked this year, doing the work of both pastor and principal, and never a complaint except that he can't get in quite all the pastoral calls he'd like to make."

Obviously, Pastor Stelling is not one of those ministers who, in the role of father or judge, tell their people just what they must do. It is hard to get him to tell you much about himself or his work, but from a hint here and there you learn of people who come to him *first* when they are in trouble, sure of sympathetic hearing and help, and you think how fortunate these people are to have such a rock of strength to rely on in their need.

Now 50, Pastor Stelling is ideally fitted to serve this community, having grown up on a farm in one much like it in Kansas. He went to work on completing Christian day school, then at 18 began his study for the ministry in preparatory school, finishing his training at the denomination's Concordia Seminary in Springfield, Illinois. His stocky, rather short figure gives the impression of sturdy good health—although the grinding demands of his present job leave him little time for relaxation or exercise. His ruddy features are serious in repose, but when a comic idea strikes him, as it frequently does, his whole face lights up and he breaks into abrupt, hearty laughter.

Young People Are Loyal

The young people in the church obviously have for Pastor Stelling a deep and confident affection. This was particularly apparent at the regular Wednesday evening Walther League meeting which The Christian Century representative attended. Eighty young people dressed in their best—no jeans and T-shirts here!—assembled in the school basement promptly at eight, carrying Bibles. After a preliminary worship service and an efficiently conducted business meeting, the pastor led them in the study for the evening—the seventh in a series of once-a-month considerations of Christian personality.

To open the discussion on integration of character, he used as outline quotations from Fosdick's *On Being a Real Person*, explaining that although he couldn't always agree with the author's theology, he considered him unexcelled as a religious psychologist. In the ensuing discussion, the young people paused often to read in unison from their Bibles a passage of apt illustration, which had been carefully selected by Pastor Stelling beforehand. From the evening's study and group exchange, it was obvious that these young Freistatters could not help getting a sound idea of what it means to have a worthy center around which to build their Christian character, and that the help they had received would go with them into their daily lives.

The young people of Freistatt, their elders tell you, are not expected to be angels. The church grounds them in the

faith from infancy, and expects them to live up to its requirements. Most of them do. Perhaps the home folks do not realize fully how good a job they do with their young people; you get an idea of how good that job is, however, when you talk to people in the neighboring towns. It is certain, for instance, that some of the other Protestant ministers, beset by recurring inroads by revivalist groups that must often be followed by strenuous efforts to reconstruct a stable program after the fire has spent itself, would give a lot to see their own young people's faces light up as do those of the young people of Trinity when they try to put into strong enough words what their church means to them. One minister explained that Pastor Stelling's predecessor had time to serve as emergency chaplain at the state tuberculosis sanatorium in Mount Vernon because he "didn't have to be out all the time winning his young people back to the church."

It is a matter of concern to some of these ministers, however, that Trinity has no hard-and-fast rules on drinking. But they admit that they have never observed any trouble with this vice in Freistatt, at least so far as the outside world is concerned. A leading member of Trinity Lutheran puts it this way: "We do have liquor around, and beer is sold in the general store and served at our weddings, so long as the receptions are not held in the church. But we teach our young people how to use it, and when to stop. That way, no one is tempted to try it just because it is forbidden. Always, if anyone is going too far, there is the board of elders to see that he is headed off." In this, as in the case of plowing on Sunday when emergencies arise, Freistatters have a biblical line of reasoning they call in as a guide. Pastor Stelling, himself a teetotaler, says he might wish that liquor were not used at all, but he too says that drunkenness has never posed a problem in Freistatt.

New Members Are Enthusiastic

Trinity Lutheran Church through the years has welcomed into its membership a few families which lived on the outskirts of the community, were impressed with the place the church has in the lives of its members, and expressed an interest in becoming a part of it. They, and the young people who marry into the church, are given a course of instruction of about 20 lectures, go through a simplified catechism, are confirmed and, unless they have been baptized in another church "in the name of the triune God," receive the sacrament of baptism. Trinity makes these new people welcome. One such, a young man whom one of the Freistatt daughters met during the war while he was stationed at a near-by camp, is now the church treasurer and one of its most devoted members. Like the others, he already feels that the church is the most treasured thing in his life and is resolved that nothing shall ever take him or his family away from its influence.

The strong hold which Trinity exerts over her members is responsible, in a way, for what is admittedly one of her weaknesses. In spite of the congregation's devotion to the denomination, its strenuous efforts on behalf of her missions and benevolences, not a single member has gone to the mission field. Not more than 15 have gone into the denomination's preaching or teaching ministry, and of those 6 were sons of John E. Roschke, who served Trinity's

pulpit for 41 years, and 3 were sons of C. Bernthal, whose period of service extended over two decades. In last year's school emergency, no young Freistatter was prepared to fill the breach. Pastor Stelling, however, is encouraged by the fact that three young men of the church are now studying in the denomination's seminary preparatory schools.

Another shortcoming is apparent to outsiders, but not to members of Trinity. This is the unwillingness, taken for granted in any loyal segment of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, to cooperate in any manner with the rest of the Protestant world. For this reason, the people of Freistatt must forego the stimulus that comes from such association, must suffer the penalty of misunderstanding described above, and must deny to other groups a chance to experience the vital contributions which they are so patently fitted to make. How valuable that contribution could be is indicated by the high praise the chaplain of the tuberculosis sanatorium has for the services Trinity's pastor and choir conduct there one Sunday a month.

They Could Inspire Others

Members of other churches in the area go to Freistatt for Trinity Lutheran's annual missions festival, when there are sermons by prominent mission executives and a big dinner is served at noon. They flock by the hundreds to the traditional school picnic, which features, among other attractions, a huge fried chicken dinner, a famous horse-drawn merry-go-round and dozens of entertainment concessions. But so far as joint enterprises are concerned, the only one in which Freistatt has taken part seems to have been last year's CROP drive, when Lawrence county led all southwest Missouri in contributions. That campaign was headed by County Agent Graham, who arranged for processed milk to be set aside in amounts designated by the farmers. Roman Catholics set the best record in the county, with Missouri Synod Lutherans second.

An observer from the outside can only regret that Trinity Lutheran should feel so little obligation to inspire other churches in the area by sharing the many good things it has to offer. What an example that Walther League could provide, for instance, if other youth groups could see it in action, hear the testimony it has to give! The powerful preaching of Pastor Stelling is heard only by his own flock, unless by chance a stray visitor finds his way to Freistatt. It would seem that other ministers could profit immensely from association with this highly educated, intelligent fellow Protestant. But he can join in civic affairs only if there is nothing relating to religion involved. The impressive annual Reformation Day service in near-by Sarcoxie is strictly a Lutheran affair. This is Missouri Synod practice—peculiarity if you will—but there it is. It does seem too bad, however, that in a day when the need for religion as an armor against myriad secular encroachments is so great, the tremendous power of this strong segment of Protestantism is available only to itself.

To say this is in no way to detract from the place Trinity Lutheran Church of Freistatt has achieved as one of the truly great rural congregations of America. Its strength and its significance are undoubted, and it richly deserves the honor which the Protestant ministers of the nation have accorded it.

VII. Olive Chapel Baptist Church

Apex, North Carolina

WHAT DOES it take to make a great rural church? A distinguished record of Christian achievement would help, and Olive Chapel Baptist Church on Rural Route 3, Apex, North Carolina, has that. A model program of current development, a strong membership and a highly trained ministry would be assets, and Olive Chapel has those. A deep and steadfast devotion would be essential, and this church has that, together with a sturdy independence which makes it work out its own problems in its own way. It does not have an unusually large, wealthy or influential membership; it lacks a big staff, a cathedral-like shrine. But no visitor to Olive Chapel will wonder long why the ministers of this country named it as one of the four great rural churches of America in the interdenominational poll taken by *The Christian Century* late in 1949.

Olive Chapel, as it is locally known, stands in the open country about twenty miles southwest of Raleigh, the capital of North Carolina. Its members are mostly tillers of small farms on the rolling face of the Piedmont plain. Their homes are modest. Many are unpainted. Their barns are generally small and sometimes ramshackle. While the people are more prosperous than formerly, there is not a wealthy man among them. But they have a quality of life which stands in luminous contrast to the materialistic standards of a commercialized and urban society.

One Hundred Years of History

From its organization just 100 years ago, this has been a successful church. It was first called Olive's Chapel, from the name of a family prominent in its establishment. Eleven men and women living in the neighborhood started the church on their own initiative. They built a crude frame chapel for the worship of God and raised up a ministry from among their own number. They started and maintained a school for the education of their children. They resolutely applied democratically conceived standards of Christian behavior to themselves through the discipline of the church, and so transformed a rough, illiterate population of pioneers into a well behaved and well educated community.

The consequence was that as long as forty years ago Olive Chapel was recognized as outstanding among the churches of the Southern Baptist denomination in North Carolina. (North Carolina now has 2,914 Southern Baptist churches, of which 1,861 are in the open country.)

Thirty years ago the pastor then serving this church won national acclaim. Ten years ago, when the church building burned down one Sunday morning at a time when the congregation was without a minister, the people built another, planning it with such wisdom that it still stands as a model for the entire region. In October 1950, when it observes the centenary of its founding, Olive Chapel is to have its remarkable story told in a book.* Through this century of its life the initiative, vision and competence of its lay leadership have been outstanding.

Church and Community Center

Olive Chapel is located on the old Durham-Fayetteville road six miles west of Apex. Members spend a considerable amount of time keeping their nine-acre church center in condition for maximum service. At the heart of these landscaped acres, on high land beside the curving road, stands the stately brick church, its white pillars accenting a Georgian design. To the southeast lies the church cemetery, in which many are buried whose voices blended in the singing schools of an earlier day. Across the road to the east are an older cemetery and a large community house equipped for church dinners, socials, games and all the group affairs of a modern farm neighborhood. North of the church stands the eight-room parsonage, surrounded by trees and a garden. In a meadow to the west is the church athletic field, from which the shouts of neighborhood ball games are often heard. A neat house for the sexton completes the center.

Olive Chapel demonstrates that rural people whose ancestry goes back to Anglo-Saxon origins can develop and maintain the institutions of religion as well as anybody else. The members of the two rural churches previously discussed in this series on American churches are chiefly descendants of 19th century immigrants from Germany. These churches at Freistatt, Missouri, and New Knoxville, Ohio, for at least two generations considered the German language and certain other elements of German culture important to their religious life. Perhaps they were right. But such elements are not now indispensable, as their own recent development and the vigor of Olive Chapel show.

Most of the people who worship at Olive Chapel trace their ancestry to English settlers who came to this country before the

**Biography of a Country Church*, by Garland A. Hendricks, to be published by Broadman Press, Nashville, Tenn.

Revolution. James Olive, from whom the church and the community get their name, was born in England in 1720. He was apprenticed to a leather-worker. At the age of 20 he came to America, working his way as a deck hand on a sailing ship which landed in New York. Attracted by stories of life in the south, he drifted down to Virginia and then to North Carolina, plying his trade as he could. After a short-lived attempt at cotton farming, he bought land on the ridge in the southwest part of Wake county. The principal town of this county was named after Sir Walter Raleigh, who made unsuccessful attempts in 1585 and 1587 to establish settlements in the state. The first permanent settlements came about 1660 in the coastal area, 200 miles from Olive Chapel.

James Olive married, had seven sons and two daughters and, with other people who came down from the north bringing no more capital than their physical endurance, began to develop the country. His sons took part on the side of the Continental Congress in some of the battles of the Revolution, North Carolina being the first state to instruct her delegates in the Continental Congress to vote for independence. With few exceptions, the English and Scotch-Irish who made up much of the population of North Carolina had little difficulty in deciding on whose side their sympathies lay. Like James Olive, they or their immediate ancestors had not only suffered want in the old country, but had felt the injustice of policies which were designed to keep them in poverty in the new. Even more keenly, they resented the English denials of religious liberty.

Ancestors Were Dissenters

A considerable share of the poor people who settled North Carolina, particularly the Piedmont region, before the Revolution were dissenters. So firmly did they resist the determined efforts made by the lords of the colony between 1701 and 1776 to impose the Established Church of England on their little settlements that at least two governors said the religious was a more important factor than the political in bringing on the final break in that province. What the ministers of the established church thought about their nonconforming neighbors was shown clearly enough by Rev. James Reed when he wrote in 1760: "A great number of Dissenters from all denominations came and settled amongst us, from New England particularly; Anabaptists, Methodists, Quakers and Presbyterians; the Anabaptists are obstinate, illiterate and grossly ignorant; the Methodists ignorant, censorious and uncharitable; the Quakers rigid but the Presbyterians are pretty moderate, except here and there a bigot or rigid Calvinist. As for Papists, I cannot learn there are above nine or ten in the whole county. I have estimated the number of heathens and infidels to be about one thousand."

The Quakers got a head start in the state, with the visits of William Edmundson and George Fox in 1672. In the early provincial councils they generally had a majority, except when they were disqualified because they refused to take loyalty oaths to Queen Anne or some other ruler. The first known Baptists arrived about twenty years later. Because of their refusal to pay tithes for the benefit of the Church of England or otherwise to carry out the law relative to the Establishment, the Quakers for a time found

themselves at the head of a resistance movement which included Scottish Presbyterians, Irish Catholics, French Huguenots, German Lutherans, English Baptists and others. This led to armed strife, known as the Cary rebellion, as early as 1711. The outbreak, which came after several years of quarreling over the church issue, was put down by English troops sent from Virginia. The Establishment became temporarily ascendant, but debate continued. Later the Presbyterians took the lead, since they had less difficulty in getting recognition for their congregations than the Baptists did. By 1776 liberation from the Church of England was a major element in the colonists' determination to gain their freedom from the English crown. The Baptists had grown and produced leaders as well as mass support for the demand for religious liberty when the final test came.

Baptists Oppose State Church

North Carolina set up its first independent provincial congress in 1774. At its fifth meeting, held at Halifax in late 1776, the congress adopted a constitution. Article XXXIV of that charter is said to have been written by Henry Abbott, a Baptist minister who was a member of the convention. "There shall be no establishment of any one religious Church or Denomination in this State in Preference to any other," it read; "neither shall any person, on any pretence whatsoever, be compelled to attend any place of worship contrary to his own Faith or Judgment, or be obliged to pay for the purchase of any Gleve, or the building of any House of Worship, or for the maintenance of any Minister or Ministry, contrary to what he believes right, or has voluntarily engaged to perform; but all persons shall be at Liberty to exercise their own mode of Worship, provided, that nothing herein shall be construed to exempt Preachers of treasonable and seditious Discourses from legal trial and Punishment." The last clause was addressed to the Church of England pastors who had not returned to the mother country ahead of the storm.

North Carolina in 1787 refused to ratify the federal Constitution, on the ground, stressed by Abbott, that it lacked a bill of rights. The state assembly then drew up a "Declaration of Rights," based on twenty articles taken from the Virginia bill, to which they added six of their own, and called on Congress to enact them. When that body complied by approving the Bill of Rights, the first article of which provided for religious liberty, North Carolina adopted the federal Constitution in a meeting at Fayetteville, a town about 50 miles south of Olive Chapel, on November 21, 1789.

The first church was not built at Olive Chapel until 1850, but this struggle, in which their ancestors took part, had not been forgotten. It is still a factor in the rugged independence which North Carolina Baptists occasionally display. By this time the hills were pretty well settled and many fields had been cleared among the tall pines for corn, tobacco and other crops. The people would sometimes travel as far as forty miles to revival meetings, but a good many were disturbed that they were compelled to raise their children in a community without church or school. On the ridge near where the church now stands a stretch of level road was used each Sunday as a track for horse racing. Less than a mile down the road there

was a tavern, appropriately named New Ruin. Track and tavern had a bad influence, attracting to the community a wild and lawless element and corrupting its own people.

Church Established by Laymen

The demand grew for a church of their own, and in the autumn of 1850 eleven people met at the rude home of Ensley Council and, with a prayer for God's blessing, constituted themselves a church. The preamble of the constitution they adopted read: "We, the Baptist Church of Christ at Olive's Chapel, feeling the great importance of Christian union and knowing from experience that two cannot walk together except they be agreed, adopt the following principles for our government, upon which we covenant and agree to hold together." The articles of agreement confessed faith "in one triune God," in "total depravity and recovery alone by grace," in Sabbath schools, missionary societies and the preaching ministry as means "designed by Almighty God to make fallen man sensible to his lost and ruined state and to lead him to Christ for conversion," in baptism by immersion, in the final perseverance of the saints and in the Bible as "our only guide to faith and practice." Five persons were converted that day. Before the congregation rounded out its first year, it had 2 deacons and 34 members. The men built a "meetinghouse" seating 100, fashioning it from their own timber with their own hands. Meetings were generally long, so they dug a well. The chapel stood across the road from where the church now stands. It was near the present site of the community house.

One of the organizers and the first pastor of the church was Johnson Olive, a farmer-preacher who contributed materials and work as generously as he gave his spiritual leadership. The surnames of other charter members were Council, Beckwith, Ragan, Goodwin, Mills, Moore, Lawrence and O'Daniel. In the membership of the church today there are 20 Olives, 15 Ragans, 107 Goodwins, 33 Millses and 20 Lawrences. There are no Councils, Beckwiths, Moores or O'Daniels. Today's church membership of 555 ranges from Arthurs to Yateses. The members' Anglo-Saxon origins are evident in names like Barker, Clark, Dawson, Eakes, Franklin, Gurley, Hinton, Holland, Jenks, Johnson, Kelly, Logan, Mason, Overton, Poole, Ragan, Seagroves, Tuck, Upchurch and Wimberly. These surnames are mostly of families which have a number of persons on the church roll. Some of them have been found on the list of church members since the first year.

Ahead of the City

Olive Chapel has never wavered from its soundly evangelical faith, but it expresses that faith in modern and contemporary ways. In this respect it stands in sharp contrast to some prominent city churches of its denomination, whose members look back with longing to their rural origins. This homesickness for scenes of long ago and far away often fastens upon city churches an expression of religious life which is not only out of place in southern cities but would also be viewed with impatience in many progressive communities in the rural south of today. Olive Chapel is the dynamic center of one of these progressive communities.

As with other successful rural churches, the bounds of

the community and of the congregation are practically identical. Most of the people in an area of around seventy square miles, which has no other church, are members. On Sunday morning the parking area in front of the church is covered with an acre or more of automobiles, and most cars come well filled with children and older people. The Sunday school, which meets first, has an enrollment of 416 and an average attendance of 224, with adults as numerous as children. Each department has its own auditorium for worship as well as neat rooms for each class. Nearly everybody goes to the church sanctuary afterward for morning worship. The people enjoy particularly the music of their modern electric organ, played by Mrs. Nellie Goodwin, and the short, earnest sermons by Garland A. Hendricks, their young pastor. Before and after church they engage in the immemorial rural custom of visiting, inside the building or outside on the sloping lawn.

Many-Sided Group Life

Olive Chapel is not a one-service or a one-day-a-week church. On Sunday evening its Baptist Training Union meets. This organization for training and service enrolls 98 persons, ranging from small children four years old to men and women of ripe maturity. It has the high average attendance through the year of 61 per Sunday. On the first Sunday evening of each month there are meetings of the 50 men of the Baptist Brotherhood and of the 115 women of the Missionary Union. Through the week there may be meetings of the 120 children in the vacation Bible school, the two choirs or several of the 25 committees which divide the work of the church between them and the Sunday school teachers. These activities are in addition to trips to young people's, denominational and other conferences, and to picnics or ball games and church suppers held on the church grounds. And of course they do not include gatherings on soil conservation, 4-H club business, the Grange or home demonstration clubs which meet at the community house, and other enterprises concerned with making a living and living a good life in a modern rural community in North Carolina.

During the past seven years, since Mr. Hendricks has been its pastor, Olive Chapel's membership has contributed an average of \$13,400 a year to all church purposes, of which between \$4,000 and \$5,000 goes to missions. The membership of the church has not grown substantially for twenty years because it then began to include practically all the people in its stable natural constituency and still does so. But twenty years ago, in the flush year of 1929, its contributions for all purposes were less than \$5,000. Fifty years ago, when it already had 320 members, the church gave less than \$500 to all causes, including the stipend paid to its pastor. Today the minister's salary compares favorably with the compensation given to many city pastors. The church sent its pastor to Europe in 1947, and he used the opportunity to good advantage in visiting nine countries of western Europe and studying rural life in the Scandinavian lands. He also attended the meeting of the Baptist World Alliance in Copenhagen. Earlier the church gave its minister an automobile. Not long ago it bestowed upon its choir director a grand piano in recognition of two decades of service.

Part of the reason for the increased generosity of the

church is that farm income has increased. At Olive Chapel the people have shared in the general rise of returns to farmers during the war and postwar years. The church helps by creating an atmosphere favorable to improvement in production and living standards. The pastor has a good deal to say about the duty of faithful stewards to conserve the land. He lists among the sins of which frontier evangelists never heard, mining the soil and wasting the timber. He exalts the virtues of cooperation, contour plowing, terracing the hillsides, building check dams, soil testing, scientific fertilizing and diversification of crops. One morning recently, when an editor of *The Christian Century* heard him preach on the text, "Be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," he reminded his congregation that the same seriousness of purpose and all-out commitment which marked their conversion should continue throughout their Christian lives. Steadfastness, he said, requires dedication and advance planning to meet contingencies. Abounding in the work of the Lord demands improving the community as well as disciplining one's self, opposing the inroads of exploitive liquor and gambling interests, and working for good schools, adequate recreational facilities for the young, a stable economic base through good farming. All this, he said, must be our free and willing gift to the Lord, our consecration of life to his service.

One of the deacons of the church, a member of the Olive family, is a district soil conservation expert and an employee of the United States department of agriculture. He ably supports the pastor's efforts to get farmers to think of the future of their children by testing and classifying the soils and building them for permanent fruitfulness. He helps farmers make out soil maps and plans for each field. He says that there are at least 20 new ponds within two miles of Olive Chapel, built in recent years to conserve the rainfall, to stop erosion, to supply fish for the people and water for the dairy cattle, and that the number of such ponds is steadily increasing. Farms hereabouts average around 100 acres per family and are valued at \$100 an acre. Through improved methods, people can make a better living on one-fourth as much land as they formerly required, even though earlier farming customs nearly ruined much of this part of the country.

Outreaches of Rural Ministry

The minister of Olive Chapel practices what he preaches about community service as unto the Lord. His study shelves display 200 recent books on agriculture and rural life. He is chaplain of the state organization of the Grange, an enlightened farmers' organization, whose local chapter uses church facilities. He is chairman of the Apex school board, whose consolidated district includes the Olive Chapel neighborhood. For some time he was chairman of a rural church committee of the state convention of his denomination. He has served as a member of the board of directors of the North Carolina Rural Institute and for some time wrote for a Greensboro farm paper. He is a friend of Governor W. Kerr Scott of North Carolina, whom he came to know when Scott was state commissioner of agriculture. Representing the Grange, he testified before the public commission which helped determine the policy of North Carolina in regard to paving and main-

taining roads. He worked successfully to get improvements made on the roads serving his own community. In March 1950 he delivered a series of lectures on the rural church at Central Baptist Seminary, Kansas City. In 1949 he was named "rural minister of the year" by the *Progressive Farmer*, a paper with a circulation of over a million, whose editor, Dr. Clarence Poe, lives in Raleigh. His reward was an expense-free three weeks' course at Emory University, Atlanta. He is a member of the social service commission of the Southern Baptist Convention and of the executive committee of the state Baptist convention.

One might search for a long time to learn whether the church is progressive because it has this kind of pastor, or vice versa. The fact is that church and pastor are suited to each other, speak the same language, serve the same high purposes. Hendricks makes no secret of his identification with the people, and they reciprocate by taking delight in and making possible his wider public service. The pastor majors in work with Olive Chapel young people, by making their recreational activities an opportunity for Christian ministry. But this community is one which for a long time has been concerned to give its young people opportunities. One of its members told *The Christian Century* that a quarter of a century ago, in a few years' time, more than 80 young people from Olive Chapel were sent to college through great sacrifice. The visitor is frequently told that some people of the ridge have long been reputed to prefer education for their children to paint for their houses or clothes, cars or even food for themselves.

The Church as Educator

This concern undoubtedly goes back to the very beginning of the church. Within a few years after its humble beginnings, a schoolhouse was built near the church by Johnson Olive. For the next half-century, in spite of the Civil War and its terrible aftermath, the church helped him and his successors as schoolmasters to bring education to the children of the community. The school was run on a fee basis long before the county or state was able to take it over. It was not a parochial school in the strict sense, but as a private enterprise in education it undoubtedly received an essential impetus from the church. The training was always given a distinctly religious accent, and so deepened the ministry of the church. Before the state finally assumed full responsibility, Olive Chapel school had three teachers and was preparing young people for college.

As long ago as the First World War, Olive Chapel received national publicity as an effective rural church. Articles describing it appeared in both the *Country Gentleman* and the *American Magazine*. Part of the reason was the remarkable 33-year ministry of William S. Olive. This son of the Olive Chapel community attended Wake Forest College and had two years in Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville. Until he reached 36 years of age, he lived on a farm in the community and preached in various churches in the surrounding countryside.

In 1894 William Olive accepted a call to give quarter-time as pastor to his home church. His salary: \$150 a year. It took ten years to bring the church to recognize its need for half-time service and eleven years longer before he was called to full-time work at \$900 a year. Meanwhile, in 1910 the church became the first rural church in the

Southern Baptist Convention and the first church of any kind in North Carolina to attain the "Standard of Excellence, Class A, Grade 1" set up by the Sunday school board of that denomination. This required that the church have a school fully graded from cradle roll to adults and a teacher training class with teachers meeting the required level of knowledge and competence. Pastor and people worked hard to bring Olive Chapel up to the mark. The results are still visible, since even the oldest members still think of the educational task of the church in the progressive terms first advocated among them by William S. Olive.

Well Deserved Attention

Such a grading-up of its educational effort brought citations to the church from all over the south. Since its records, which were complete from the beginning, had been transferred to Wake Forest College, writers began to make use of them when the church gained denominational fame. Some of these articles came to the attention of the *Country Gentleman* and resulted in the appearance of the first article on Olive Chapel in a national magazine. Later many of its sons who had gone overseas in the war were thrilled to find in the *American Magazine* an article entitled, "An Ideal Country Preacher." It was the story of their pastor and church. "Rural leadership, born of 'one of the boys of the community' and a passion to preach the simple gospel of repentance, have produced wonderful results in church upbuilding," it said. "There is not an illiterate child of school age in the community, not a pauper in the vicinity; only four tenant families hold membership in the church and no neighbor in sickness is neglected. Temperance and morality are definite parts of this church's constructive program. . . . Nor is Olive Chapel inactive in the maintenance of its material prosperity. Its program is both sacred and practical." A generation and two wars later, the story is similar. This church goes from strength to strength. William S. Olive carried on until age and failing health finally forced him to resign in 1926. His last work for the church was to help build a parsonage for his successor, who could not live on his own farm as Olive had done.

Pastor a Carolinian

In the years which have followed Mr. Olive's retirement, the church has continued to have excellent pastoral guidance. Its present minister has made the best of a notable heritage. Garland A. Hendricks is now 37 years old. He comes from a farm family of small means and grew up in the Macedonia Baptist Church about sixty miles northeast of Olive Chapel. He was converted in a revival meeting at the age of 12 and the following year decided to become a minister. He worked his way through Wake Forest College, preaching part of the time at his home church and at other rural chapels. After graduating in 1933, he taught a rural school for \$65 a month and preached for a year. Then he entered the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, again working his way and graduating in 1937. Two weeks later he married Estelle Dabbs, a Louisville student from South Carolina. They decided to cast their lot with rural churches, "so numerous, so much in need of trained leadership and so much neglected by

denominational leaders." For shepherding four such churches in North Carolina, he received a salary of \$1,360. To keep from falling into a rut, he and his wife decided to sacrifice other things in order to attend meetings, subscribe to good papers and read at least two good books a week.

By 1940 he had started writing for denominational and farm papers and had moved to Knightdale Baptist Church, a full-time village charge in the same county where Olive Chapel is located. An attack of rheumatic fever about the time their second child was born laid Hendricks low for a while but brought a new kind of assurance to a life whose experience had made illness a synonym for economic disaster. He discovered that "when the members of a church love someone they will not let him suffer for life's necessities nor will they let him lack for sympathy and love. Some of my worries about life left me, never to return." He started a campaign to get some recognition for the convictions and needs of rural churches in the North Carolina convention of his denomination, and was made chairman of a committee. This did not have the usual effect of disposing of the matter. He and his colleagues went to work on a report which has begun to produce a changed attitude toward ecclesiastical country cousins.

A Better Deal for Rural Churches

In 1948 Hendricks turned out another special study. It started with the assumption that "the convention should be a representative democracy doing the will of the 600,000 Baptist people of North Carolina." The report showed that 93 persons occupied the 119 places on eight important boards and committees of the convention, and 86 per cent of these places were filled by ministers, who make up four-tenths of 1 per cent of the membership. Only 3 per cent of the convention offices were filled by persons living in the country, although over 60 per cent of the Baptists in the state live in the country and small towns. "One whole region, comprising several Baptist associations in western North Carolina, is not represented on any of the eight boards and committees studied." Since then rural churches are getting a much better deal. Wake Forest College started a course in rural church administration, which the Olive Chapel pastor taught for two years until a full-time man could be secured. Other changes are occurring.

But this runs ahead of the story. Hendricks accepted a call to become pastor of Olive Chapel in 1943. The next year, after getting acquainted, he presented a six-year program of work which the church adopted. It was concerned with the development of spiritual life, the strengthening of church organizations and the improvement of physical equipment. This program is nearing completion. Under the first head, the church has increased the number of homes having family worship and the number of tithers, but has not attained its goal of universal participation. It has succeeded in having a revival meeting each year. It has established junior and senior choirs and has brought gifts for others close to 50 per cent of all contributions. Under the second head, nearly 90 per cent of resident members take part in its work. A smaller proportion study the Bible. Each organization sponsors a study course. About 60 per cent of the adult members study the world Chris-

tian mission and the church has a vacation Bible school every year.

The goals for physical improvement have been more nearly met. The church debt of \$8,500 was paid in 1945 and a new organ bought and paid for. Briars and unneeded trees have been cleared from the church center. Shrubbery and grass have been planted. The parsonage has been screened, renovated and modernized. Fruit trees have been planted, a deep well dug. A sexton's house was built, the community house improved for winter recreation, a power lawn mower bought and an electric water cooler installed. Pianos and other equipment for the Sunday school have been added, and filing cabinets installed in the pastor's office.

A new garage and woodshed are yet to be built. After investigating the cost, the church gave up the ideas of installing air conditioning and setting up its own broadcasting station. It still expects to acquire motion picture equipment. In recent weeks the congregation raised \$2,771 to beautify its sanctuary in preparation for the centennial. Many of its people are looking forward with anticipation to the publication this fall of *Biography of a Country Church*. Their pastor, who is a competent literary craftsman, has worked three years on this 200-page volume. He has had the advantage of working with records which have carefully been kept throughout the century and with people whose memories span lives lived in a community where their ancestors lived before them. Mr. Hendricks' work in this book was of great help to The Christian Century in its study of his church.

Neat Rural Housekeeping

The effects of the many-sided ministry of the church are evident throughout the community surrounding Olive Chapel. Seven out of ten hill farmers now practice contour plowing to stop erosion. So many check dams have been built that one often sees fishermen proudly carrying strings of fish or hopefully watching a cork on a pond. All the farmers use fertilizer and three-fourths of them plant cover crops to build up the land. Men meeting at the church talk about the relative merits of lespedeza, kudzu, sericea and crotalaria—leguminous crops which rebuild worn-out fields. Over half the farms are terraced and on the steepest hills strip cropping is practiced. There are many more pastures than formerly, for farmers have discovered that this land will support one dairy cow per acre if it is rightly handled.

One farmer, who was bankrupt in the thirties, told The Christian Century that he dates his comeback to prosperity from the time when he began to use conservation methods instead of trying to wring every last cent out of his land by growing cash-crop tobacco. This man and his nephew recently left home one morning, drove 25 miles to the Raleigh-Durham airport and flew to Chicago. There they bought 16 Holstein milch cows and arranged for their shipment to North Carolina. They were back home that night. He makes a good living for his own family and four other families on 125 acres, and he believes that his present method of farming is good religion as well as good husbandry.

Ralph A. Felton, rural church expert of Drew Theological Seminary, visited Olive Chapel and described it in an

article in the *Progressive Farmer* for February 1949. Referring to it as "a great country church," he listed seven reasons for its success. Said Dr. Felton:

1. This church has had long pastorates. Since 1850, the average length of time each pastor has stayed has been ten years. The longest was 33 years. Just as sharecroppers who move every year wear out the soil, so migrant ministers stunt church growth. But not here. The ministers of this church have stayed and the church has grown.
2. This is the only church in a community of 70 square miles. It did not have to use up its energy or waste its religion keeping ahead of another church. A second church in a rural community is like a mortgage on the farm. It uses up the savings. This church had no competition. Its program has been community-wide.
3. This church has succeeded because the pastor, church leaders and the members have preached and practiced the proper care of the soil as a religious duty.
4. It has cared for its youth. It has trained young people as well as saved old sinners.
5. The pastor and the people have provided wholesome social life right here at home. It takes more work to do this than to condemn commercialized amusements in some distant city. But it pays better dividends.
6. The building and equipment are adequate to house the religious program here.
7. These pastors, living among the people, have been able to interpret religion in terms of farm life. The first six pastors who served from 1850 to 1926 were all from the immediate neighborhood. Here life is a unit. The church is the farmer's most loved institution.

When The Christian Century talked with Governor W. Kerr Scott at the state capitol in Raleigh, he was delighted to learn that this church was being studied. "The Olive Chapel Baptist Church is a model," he said. The governor, a Presbyterian, said that the reactivation of the rural church is necessary to the preservation of American civilization. Church people and their denominations have got to see this, he declared, and undertake to create other churches as effective as Olive Chapel all over the land. "Government cannot do that job for them," he said. He pointed out that the proportion of home-owned and owner-operated farms is higher in North Carolina than in any other state.

As a churchman, Governor Scott said that the general weakness of the rural church is a major problem in the rehabilitation of rural life. He maintained that the great movement now going on to make adequate the physical facilities of rural life is handicapped by a retarded church, which is failing in its job of creating spiritual guidance for the community. He declared that every properly located rural church needs a full-time minister and said: "The absentee minister is a greater curse than the absentee landlord." This is not the minister's fault, but the system's. The governor complimented Hendricks, who was present, and freely declared that when the chief executive has a speech to make where he can put in a good word for the rural church, he calls on this Baptist pastor for suggestions as to what he should say.

Will Denominations Let Rural Churches Live?

Olive Chapel is a powerful church, as we have seen, because it is identified with its community. It stands as proof of the ministry the church can render when it accepts its community mission and is given opportunity to carry it out. A study which Hendricks made in 1948 concludes

with words from Arthur Morgan's *The Small Community* which are appropriate here: "In modern times the small community has played the part of an orphan in an unfriendly world. It has been despised, neglected, exploited, robbed. The cities have skimmed off the cream of its young population. Yet the small community has supplied the lifeblood of civilization, and neglect of it has been one of the primary reasons for the slowness and the interrupted course of human progress. It is high time that the fundamental significance of the small community be recognized."

We would add only that the central factor in the rehabilitation of the small community, as Olive Chapel

shows, is the rural church. Its revival waits on the awakening of the Protestant conscience. The Southern Baptist is not the only denomination which has "despised, neglected, exploited, robbed" rural churches and their communities. Indeed, the recognition it has extended to Olive Chapel and to other rural churches suggests that it is already bringing forth the fruits of repentance. It still has a long way to go, and others have a longer, before they can be said to honor, nurture, build up and do justice to the rural community and its church. Not until that road has been traveled can it be said that the denominational system is justified by its contribution to the Kingdom of God.

VIII. First Presbyterian Church Hollywood, California

HOLLYWOOD, for most Americans, and for a large part of the rest of the world, has become a synonym for the fleshpots—in technicolor, and on a Cecil B. DeMille scale. Hollywood is sophistication. It is ostentation. It is crass materialism. It is loose living—married today; divorced tomorrow; a breakdown in an alcoholic sanatorium next week. On the day *The Christian Century* began its study in the movie capital the headlines were shrieking, "Senate to Probe Hollywood Vice." But on an inside page the Hollywood evening paper carried announcements of the services to be held in 99 churches and 18 chapels on the following day. One of these is the largest Presbyterian church in the United States. It has the largest Sunday school in that denomination. The Protestant ministry of America had called for a report on that church as one of twelve in the nation most deserving of study. There were saints even in Caesar's household. There's a great church in Hollywood.

Press Agent's Fantasy

After one has been in Hollywood a little while one begins to wonder whether much of the town's reputation for glittering sin is not largely a press agent's fantasy. Perhaps there are wild parties now and again in some of the mansions where live members of the movie colony who temporarily—very temporarily—have more money than they know how to handle. But Hollywood, seen day after day as the mine-run of its residents see it, does not differ much from other American towns. The stores along Hollywood Boulevard are the same sort you will find along any city Main Street. The people who wait for the green light at Sunset and Vine might have been recruited from a hundred towns in Iowa to boom the population from a scanty 5,000 forty years ago to a quarter-million today. The youngsters who pile off buses and trolleys to pack the far reaches of the Hollywood high school look exactly like those who trampled the grass on your lawn on their way past your house this morning.

"How many of the workers in this studio are church members and take an active interest in their church?" the *Century's* representative asked a top-rank executive at Paramount. The movie-maker (he was a church elder himself) ran a reflective eye around the commissary before he slowly replied, "About the same proportion, I suppose, as over in the Douglas aircraft plant." Would the same hold true for the other studios? Yes, just about the same.

The First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, a section of Los Angeles, California, was chosen in The Christian Century's poll of 100,000 ministers as the church in a large city in the southwest quarter of the nation most worthy of study. Included in the balloting in this category were churches in California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, Arkansas and Louisiana. Runners-up to the Hollywood church in the voting were the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles and the First Baptist Church of Dallas.

On first visiting Hollywood's First Presbyterian Church one gets much this same impression of America-as-usual. To be sure, everything about the church takes on Hollywoodish super-colossal proportions. The size of the membership, the size of the staff, the size of the plant now in process of building, the size of the budget, the size of the benevolences, the size of the card filing system, the size of the various organizations, the number of organizations—all are on a scale which will not be approached by any other church in this series of studies. Yet once you are in one of the church's 1,700 seats, the atmosphere is not much different from that in almost any "First church" on a Kansas courthouse square. One suspects that one of the factors which have helped to build the membership above the 5,800 mark is the feeling that, inside this congregation, "it's just like back home." To practically every dweller in Hollywood, somewhere else is "back home."

The remarkable thing these Hollywood Presbyterians have succeeded in doing is to preserve this sense of close communal ties in a membership of such size, while at the same time finding ways of active participation in the church's life for all who do not avoid such participation. How do they do it? Membership grows at the rate of about 600 additions a year. How do they keep these new members from being lost in the crowd?

Not Lost in the Crowd

An answer might be given by outlining the organizational setup and charting the activities of the more than 300 societies, classes, groups, clubs, auxiliaries, fellowship teams, choirs, camps, circles, flocks and what have you. But the impression left, one fears, would be a sort of gigantic church factory "processing" its product in a high-speed, conveyor-belt, mass-production fashion. The First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood is not like that at all. It is an intensely personal experience for all who are touched by it. So let's try to come at its operations in a more personal way. Let's try to see what happened to Mr. and Mrs. Edward T. Green and their children when they came within this church's orbit. The Greens, it hardly needs to be said, are typical, not actual, members of Hollywood Presbyterian.

Ed Green was brought to Los Angeles from Springfield, Ohio, as assistant manager of one of the links in the chain of drugstores where he had worked for years. The Greens settled in Hollywood, partly because there they found good schools for their 14-year-old boy, George, and partly so that

18-year-old Sarah could be within easy reaching distance of U.C.L.A. Mrs. Green had been a church member in Ohio, and the children had gone to Sunday school there. But Sarah had dropped out several years before, and George's attendance was growing more and more desultory by the time the family moved to the west coast. Mr. Green had no church connections.

Finding Friends in Hollywood

A little while after they landed in Hollywood, however, the elder Greens began to develop an interest in the sermons of a Presbyterian minister, Dr. Louis H. Evans, which they stumbled into on the radio one Sunday night. Within a few weeks they found themselves tuning in Dr. Evans regularly; his preaching was the direct yet eloquent expression of a man who evidently believed intensely in the truth of what he was saying. There was a good deal of scriptural reference in it, and much direct application to the problems which beset the ordinary American. It came in effectively over the air, and it was reinforced by the singing of a remarkable choir.

One Sunday morning Mrs. Green surprised her husband by suggesting that they go to church. Ed grumbled a little about having to dress up and forsake the Sunday paper, but they went. They found the church whose broadcasts had interested them on a side street about five blocks from the famous corner of Hollywood and Vine. They also found that they would be lucky if they could park within five minutes' walking distance. When they came within sight of the church they saw a tightly packed crowd waiting at the doors and extending far down the block. The first morning worship service, which had started at 9:30, was not quite over. When it ended, and the early congregation filed out, this second congregation waiting in the streets would surge in to pack the auditorium.

The Point of Contact

The Greens discovered, once they were inside, that they had chanced on a communion service. In the pew rack in front of them they saw a neat packet of seven cards of graduated lengths, each for a different purpose: "Call requested," "Visitor's card," "Prospect card," "Prayer request," and so on. Mrs. Green filled out the one headed "Communicant's card": "I participated in the Lord's Supper at First Presbyterian Church, Hollywood." She gave her name, address, phone number, and in a line at the bottom, "Member of this church?" she checked the "No" space. She was tempted to fill out the visitor's card, but a glance at her husband's apprehensive face deterred her.

On Friday Mrs. Green had a telephone call. It came from Dr. W. D. Johnson, who told her that he was one of the ministers of the church and that he had been delighted to find her card among those of nearly 400 other visiting communicants. He invited the family, if it was settling in Hollywood, to make First Presbyterian its church home. Mrs. Green thanked him, but made no commitments. She was not sure how Ed would feel about it. When she told him about the invitation, however, and on Sunday morning suggested that they go again, Ed proved surprisingly agreeable. The Greens had not made many friends in Hollywood up to that time, and he had liked the way

in which he had been greeted on the previous Sunday. Mrs. Green tentatively suggested that George and Sarah might like to go along with their parents to church, but she was not surprised when they declined.

As the Greens were leaving the sanctuary after that second Sunday service a man of about Ed's age introduced himself, discovered who the Greens were, and invited Ed to go with him to the men's club dinner the following Friday. Dean Cromwell, the Olympic track coach, was to be the headliner. Ed went, thoroughly enjoyed himself, met a number of other men who seemed "his kind," and as the crowd was breaking up found himself being steered into a quiet corner by one of these new acquaintances. Without knowing it, he was in the hands of a member of "The Seventy"—a group specially trained by Dr. Johnson, the church's "minister of evangelism," for just such service.

Ed had begun to brace himself against an invitation to join the church when he was jolted by a question he wasn't expecting, "Do you have God in your life, Mr. Green?" He stammered a bit in trying to answer that one. "Don't you feel that you need him? Wouldn't you like to find him? Won't you let us help you find him in the fellowship of this church?"

Introduced to the Session

Well, the upshot of it all was that two Sundays after that, at the close of the morning service, Mr. and Mrs. Green came down to the front of the church, where Dr. Johnson was waiting. He introduced them to the session, the governing board of a Presbyterian church, which they later found out meets after every service in the Hollywood church to interview candidates for membership. The session received Mrs. Green by transfer from Ohio. It recommended that her husband receive instruction in preparation for reception on profession of faith.

For the next four Sunday mornings the Greens attended the preparatory class conducted by Dr. Johnson, for when Mrs. Green learned that it was open to her at her option she decided to go with her husband. For him, attendance was obligatory. At the first session the Greens, together with about eighty others, heard an hour's instruction in "What it means to be a Christian." The second session was devoted to active aspects of the Christian life—how the Christian puts his religion into practice. The third was given to a discussion of the church, its history, doctrines and the various types of church government. And the fourth to an exposition of the sacraments.

An Application for Membership

Before the close of this preparatory course Mr. Green asked for an application for church membership. This turned out to be a four-page folder, perforated down the middle so that it could be easily divided into two parts. On one side he was asked to sign his profession of faith and pledge:

I do believe Christ to be the Son of God and the Savior of the world. I promise to follow him as my Lord and Master. I will be faithful in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and will make diligent use of this means of grace. I am resolved, with God's help, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, to keep his commandments all the days of my life; to become a growing and

useful member of his church, to attend its services, to take, as far as possible, active part in its work; and unselfishly to seek to make his will effective in my community and in the world.

On the back of this sheet Mr. Green found listed 86 different kinds of service in the church; beneath his pledge of church loyalty he was asked to indicate, along with personal data, which of these services he was prepared to render. On the opposite sheet, ready to be torn off to go to the church treasurer, he was asked to make his pledge to the operating expenses of the church and to its benevolences. The Hollywood church does not believe that one seeking membership should be admitted without making such specific pledges of service and financial support as evidence of serious purpose.

So Ed Green completed the course of instruction, filled out his application, was recommended to the session by Dr. Johnson, voted into membership by the session, and the following Sunday morning, along with Mrs. Green, was received into full membership. It might have been on a Sunday morning when *The Christian Century* was represented in the congregation, for on that day 182 new members were taken in—64 on profession of faith and 42 on reaffirmation. Thirty of the adults had to be baptized before their reception. The Hollywood church takes pride in the fact that its rapidly growing membership is not predominantly gained by transfer from other churches.

Assigned for Pastoral Care

On the morning after their reception Mr. and Mrs. Green passed to the pastoral care of another minister on the Hollywood staff. So far as they were concerned, the minister of evangelism had completed his task. All the data concerning them went now to Dr. C. B. Gahagen, the "minister of shepherding." Had they been a little younger (under 40) he would have passed them along to the "new life minister," the Rev. Richard Halverson. At their age, however, they fell into the younger of the two adult groups, both the immediate responsibility of Dr. Gahagen.

Within a few days they learned they had been assigned to a "flock"—one of about a hundred regional groups, each led by an ordained elder or deacon known as a "shepherd." These meet in the homes of shepherds or flock members, hold a sort of old-fashioned cottage prayer meeting under the guidance of the minister of shepherding, and then help newcomers start the process of forming friendships within the congregation. Flocks vary from 20 to 40 families in size. Both the Greens were pressed to join adult Bible classes, and did so. This meant attending church services at 9:30 on Sunday morning and spending more than an hour after that in Sunday school. They were urged to attend prayer meetings on Wednesday, and began to do so with fair regularity. Mrs. Green soon found herself in the women's missionary society and in the division of the women's auxiliary which took in that part of town in which she lives. A few months later she joined the "Cordon of Prayer."

This "Cordon of Prayer" was something new in her church experience. Under the supervision of the session's committee on prayer, she discovered, 1,500 members had been pledged to pray daily in response to the requests for prayer which are handed in at every service on cards in

the pew racks provided for that purpose and others which are constantly being received at the church offices. The "cordon" is commanded by two "colonels." One of these sifts out the prayer requests; the other keeps the organization in running order. Under the "colonels" are "captains"; under the "captains" are "disciples"; under the "disciples" there are "pray-ers." Each "disciple" instructs seven "pray-ers" in each week's prayer purposes; each "captain" instructs 20 "disciples" after receiving instructions from the "colonel." No member of the Hollywood congregation goes to a hospital—to cite an example of the "cordon's" activity—without knowing that 1,500 other members are praying for him. No family is plunged into sorrow without knowing that 1,500 others are sharing that sorrow in prayer. Whatever one's rationale of prayer may be, the effect on the spirit of fellowship even in such a huge congregation as that in Hollywood is something which cannot be discounted. The wives of the 36 elders are also organized in a special praying band, divided into groups so that every one can be instructed by phone within 30 minutes to pray for special purposes in emergency situations.

Reaching for the Younger Set

Ed Green was as quickly drawn into the activities of the church as his wife. He had checked, on his membership application, an interest in music, and presently was practicing regularly in a men's chorus. The "minister of week-day activities" followed up other data supplied in the same way to induce him to become an assistant leader of a Boy Scout troop. He was a bit startled to find himself roped in for duty as second bass in a quartet which sang for a men's deputation to the county jail on Sunday afternoons, but after the first time or two he became interested in a couple of the prisoners, and after that found the jail visits one of the week's eagerly anticipated highlights.

Meanwhile, what happened to the Greens' children? George was in junior high. After a few months, he was invited to join a Junior Hi-Y club of picked classmates, sponsored by the Hollywood Y.M.C.A., but under the direction of "Walt" James. The club played basketball in the Presbyterian church gymnasium, but it took a few weeks before George got it straight in his mind that his club leader, a rugged figure who he was told in awed whispers had once been an Ohio state motorcycle cop, was actually the Rev. Walter James, in charge of the church's weekday activities.

What happened after that followed a familiar pattern. When spring came George jumped at a chance to play in the church's softball league. Not long after, his pals had him in a Sunday school class. He went on beach parties with other youngsters of his own age. Twice he was taken with a selected group to the mountains for a week end of camping and discussion of life problems. Once there was a long trip in the church's bus taken for the same purpose to a Mexican seaside town in Lower California. When, at length, his Sunday school teacher asked him to accept Christ—and that was the form the invitation took; not whether he thought the time had come to join the church or something of that sort—he responded as would be expected.

Sarah joined a sorority at U.C.L.A. One afternoon the

sorority house was visited by a deputation from the Hollywood church, some of them girls from the same or near-by campuses, some girls who had been out of college a year or two. The young movie actress who had scored in a current picture naturally commanded attention for the entire delegation. This first deputation visit was followed by a second, and a few weeks later Sarah, somewhat to her surprise, agreed to accompany one of the deputation members to a party held by the college department in the church. As one in a crowd of about 400 with the unmistakable collegiate brand on them, Sarah had a whale of a good time. She was only a little surprised when the woman who seemed to be at the center of things—the director of Christian education, Dr. Henrietta Mears, she was told—wound up proceedings with a brief reading from the Bible and a few minutes of prayer in which several of the students took part.

For Sarah, also, the road from then on was one which many another young collegian had traveled. She joined the college department, where she found herself one of about 600 students drawn from the many colleges in the Los Angeles area. She was at her department's Bible class by 9:30 on Sunday morning; then at church; then, after a hurried meal, at a committee meeting or on deputation work at a mission in the Mexican quarter during the afternoon; back to the church for a testimony meeting, much on the order of traditional Christian Endeavor meetings, at 6:15; to the evening service, largely made up of young people, at 7:45; finally to a "sing" in a home large enough to accommodate a couple of hundred youngsters. It was 10:30 by the time her usual Sunday schedule was completed. But on Wednesday she was back at 6:45 for a rehearsal of the college choir; after supper at the church she took part in a college-group prayer meeting. Later, when she became an officer of the college department, she turned out at 6:30 on Saturday mornings for special Bible study, prayer, committee work—and breakfast.

Ed Green Sums Up

One night at dinner Ed Green suddenly laughed. "What's funny?" asked his wife.

"Do you remember how I kicked about getting dressed and leaving the Sunday paper that first Sunday we went to church here?" he demanded. "Well, I was doing a little figuring today, and as near as I can make out, if you take into account the time you spend preparing your Bible lessons and the time I've been spending recently making that diorama for the third grade in the primary department, this family puts in just about 41 or 42 hours a week in that church or in church work. Most likely, I've overlooked some things and it's more than that."

"Well, you don't regret it, do you?" asked Mrs. Green. "You wouldn't have it any other way?"

"No, I wouldn't have it any other way," Ed said, while Sarah grinned approvingly at her father.

"Sure, it's swell," commented George. "How about some more meat loaf?"

Now this story of the Greens, apocryphal as it is, is nevertheless truthful. There are plenty of families in the Hollywood Presbyterian Church who give as much time to the church as the Greens: many who give more. The number of activities in which such a family would be ex-

pected to participate has not been exaggerated; scores more might have been listed, all competing for the services of the Greens if they seemed natural prospects. During the week after a new class of members has been received, this paper discovered, the office of the minister of shepherding prepares six different kinds of filing cards—including a special "talents" file—covering each one of the new members and distributes these to eleven divisions and organizations in the church and to 97 "flock" leaders. There are more than 25,000 cards in the church's files, each tabulating different aspects of the members' relationship. Everybody who joins the Hollywood church is supposed to become a working member, and practically everybody does.

The enthusiasm for their church which permeates the congregation has a tremendous influence in making new members expect to work. And a staff of 6 ordained ministers, 4 other department heads, 20 more full-time employed workers, 19 part-time employed workers and dozens of pretty well trained volunteers can guard against the dangers of bigness by seeing to it that the individual member is not lost in the crowd. It is the contention of the Hollywood ministers that their members are given more direct pastoral attention and more opportunities to employ their talents in the work of the church than is the case in most congregations of a fifth the size. The Christian Century could not study the Hollywood church long enough to pass on the truth of that claim. But it was impressed by the efforts which are being made to make it good. If there are drones in the Hollywood hive, there are enough workers incessantly at work to hide them from sight.

The Hollywood Plant

The Hollywood Presbyterian Church is only 47 years old. Most of its growth has come in the past ten years. Readers may remember the pictures of its substantial, but architecturally undistinguished, sanctuary which appeared in *Life* a couple of years ago. Since that time a \$1.5 million building program has been launched which will add five more structures to the plant. One of these, a memorial chapel, has been completed, and the second, an educational unit for the junior, junior high and senior high school departments of the Sunday school, is nearly ready. As soon as it has been dedicated a gymnasium and social building will follow, then another educational unit, and finally a building which will contain an auditorium, a dining room and a varied assortment of parlors. The plant will then cover most of the block on one corner of which the church now stands. By that time, also, the Los Angeles automobile speedway which is to pass less than a hundred yards away should be finished. When that opens the elders and deacons can begin again to wonder what to do about parking. To an outlander, helicopters seem the only solution.

As has been said, it is necessary to hold two services on Sunday morning to accommodate the approximately two-thirds of the membership—plus visitors—who can be counted on to attend. In general terms, it is planned to have the older members worship at 9:30 and attend Sunday school at 11, while the younger ones reverse the process. Providing worship opportunities at Easter grew to be such a problem that for the past three years that service has been held in the Hollywood Bowl, with about 12,000 present. The Sunday school enrolls over 4,000 and,

pending the completion of the new plant, has spilled over from the church and the original Sunday school building into half a dozen residences near by, which have been purchased, as well as into a neighboring public school building which is rented for Sunday use. The budget now stands at about \$250,000 a year, which does not take into account the \$100,000 to \$113,000 annually given to missions (the Hollywood church supports, entirely or in part, 26 Presbyterian missionaries), the \$88,000 recently given to the Presbyterian "Restoration Fund," or the million and a half being raised for the building program. One explanation given for this generosity is the large number of tithers.

The church's session is made up of 36 elders and 18 deacons. These serve for only three years at a time. Then they make way for new men, but a man thus displaced can be elected again after the lapse of a year. The seven-man board of directors—they would be called trustees in most churches—is chosen from the elders of the session. By this device the church can be fairly sure that there will never be a conflict in policy between session and directors. These laymen in the Hollywood session supply leadership for many denominational boards and commissions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. They hold important posts in the Los Angeles council of churches. They see that help, sometimes financial and more often in personal service, is provided for struggling Presbyterian churches and missions in that part of southern California. They enlist the resources of the congregation in community enterprises to such an extent that last year the church was given special commendation by the community chest for its help. As has been said, every elder and deacon, whether or not on the active list, is held responsible for "shepherding" one of the "flocks" into which the congregation is divided.

Pastor the Key Figure

And the key figure in all this? There can be only one answer—the senior minister, Dr. Louis H. Evans.

On the day *The Christian Century* began its study of Hollywood Presbyterian, its representative sat alone for a while in the senior minister's office, looking at the big plaster bust of the good-looking man that dominated the room and wondering what sort of person the original would turn out to be. Suddenly the door was thrust open and a tall, vigorous figure strode in. The long body was topped by a handsome head with a jutting jaw; darting, piercing eyes under heavy brows; a mouth firmly clamped but quick to relax in a winning smile. The man looked like a college athlete only a few years out of competition; later it was to develop that he had been a varsity, and after that a semi-pro, basketball star.

Almost before his handshake could be finished he had noticed a telegram on top of the papers on the desk. He snatched it up; it proved to be from a man in jail for drunkenness who was appealing for ten dollars to get out. The name signed to the wire meant nothing to the minister, but in another minute a rapid series of directions were being flung at the secretary who had been summoned from the next room. These were to see that the man in trouble would quickly be visited by a member of the congregation competent to size up his case and, if that seemed the wise thing to do, bail him out.

It was a good introduction, for it was characteristic of the pace at which Dr. Evans works all the time and of the sort of "extracurricular" matters that are forever turning up to claim his attention. His calendar of engagements, in town and out of town, is as staggering as that of President Truman. He has learned to do most of his sermon and speech preparation while in his car, where he has a typewriter rigged up on a folding desk in the back seat. He has taught himself to be quite unconscious of the car's motion, or of what is transpiring along the street, as he types away. (His wife devotes a large part of her time to driving him about. She is the sort of chauffeur who makes it easy for the man in the back seat to concentrate on his study and writing.) The man's working day begins about half-past six. It closes sometime after midnight. He has a study at home in which he gets some work done. But the office in the church he sees only when he dashes in to pick up mail, check on pending engagements, hold a committee meeting, or use it for a rendezvous with a visitor.

Top-Flight Preacher

In Hollywood and in the Los Angeles region, Dr. Evans is regarded as a top-flight preacher. His is very effective preaching—not sensational in a region surfeited with pulpit sensationalism, not often rhetorical, but solid preaching of the conservative Presbyterian type, with the sermons well put together and delivered with deadly earnestness. When asked to define his theological position, the Hollywood minister says, "I stand on the Westminster Confession. I do not believe there has ever been a better definition of the Protestant faith." "But," he adds, with a smile, "I hope no one will push me too hard to explain predestination!" He is a graduate of a Presbyterian college (Occidental) and a Presbyterian theological seminary (McCormick); he is the son of a Presbyterian minister marked in the denomination for years of evangelistic teaching of the Bible. All these elements make their influence felt in the Hollywood pulpit today. When one remembers that the man must prepare two sermons and generally at least three or four other full-length addresses every week, to say nothing of his endless talks before clubs, schools and church societies, one is impressed by the quality of his pulpit product.

To at least one observer, however, the senior minister of Hollywood Presbyterian seemed an even greater teacher than preacher. He is always trying to expand his teaching ministry. On Sunday afternoon, after his two morning services, the Century's representative drove with him 18 miles—through the nightmare of Los Angeles Sunday afternoon traffic!—to a conference ground at Pacific Palisades where the Mariners' Club of the church, made up of married couples from 20 to 30 years of age, had been holding a week-end retreat. There for an hour and a half he answered questions which ran the gamut from "What is the proper form of baptism?" to "How should one handle a drunken husband?" and "What is the wisest way to go about adopting a child?" One young couple who had asked, "How can we learn to pray effectively in family worship?" got a remarkable ten-minute instruction, whether they appreciated it or not, in the art of building a family altar. After that the minister drove back to Hollywood for his evening service.

The next Wednesday Dr. Evans devoted the section of

the church prayer meeting which he conducts to the final session in a series of four on marriage problems. The chapel was crowded with young married people under 40. This time the minister stepped aside and let a physician answer questions. But the realism of the preceding sessions could be gauged from the searching nature of the questions which they had raised. Such, for instance, as "Can a married Christian perform the sexual act in ways that are wrong?" How many prayer meetings, one wonders, penetrate as far as that into their attendants' lives?

Teaching That Counts

In many respects, however, Dr. Evans' most telling teaching is done with his session. Meetings of that body (except the brief ones at the close of church services to meet candidates for membership) open, not with a drowsy reading of the minutes, but with at least fifteen minutes' study—often much longer—of some such topic as the meaning of the church, the place of the laity in the history of the church, the place of Presbyterianism in the history of the church. Any man who serves as an elder or a deacon in Hollywood gets a three-year course in church history and doctrine. And it is not just a lecture course; each member of session takes home after every meeting a four-page syllabus to encourage and guide him in further study.

As might be expected of such a driving personality, Dr. Evans has close relations with the movie colony. A number of actors are members of the church; a number of them have a regularly organized prayer group which meets monthly in an actor's or actress' home. While this study was being made this group met at Jane Russell's, but as Miss Russell was away on a personal appearance tour the Century's representative pulled no wires to wangle an invitation. Many screen celebrities appear in special services and entertainments at the church, and the congregation long ago became accustomed to seeing bit players and extras with scraggly beards or unshorn locks in the pews on Sunday. Several of the church's laymen hold high executive positions in the film industry. Dr. Evans is himself on the national board of the Protestant Film Commission, and the resources of his church are helping greatly to better the output of that fast improving organization.

Evangelism for Alcoholics

The evangelistic spirit marks every aspect of the Evans ministry. One problem which seems on the increase in Hollywood—though whether more than in other cities may be questioned—is alcoholism. The church has in its congregation quite a number of members of Alcoholics Anonymous, and cooperates closely with that organization. Not long ago, however, a man who had joined, but still found the going hard, came to the pastor.

"Dr. Evans," he said, "there's one thing I need I haven't found. I need to get God. Isn't it the business of your church to help me get God?"

"That's right," the minister instantly agreed. "Let's get him." And the two knelt in prayer until the struggling man "got him."

There is no doubt in the minister's mind that his visitor did "get him." More important, there is no doubt in the visitor's mind. He is today an active layman in the church, taking a leading part in the formation of a group of lay-

men with a similar experience who intend to offer former alcoholics the added help to be found in a circle where there is forthright Christian commitment. These men, sparked by the minister, do not in the least derogate the importance of A.A., in which most of them retain their membership. But they believe that the Christian church should take over where A.A. leaves off. They call their group the "Alcoholic Workshop." In the name of an avowed Master to whom they testify constantly they offer their wrestling fellows the help of A.A. plus.

The Hollywood Church Staff

Every one of the five ordained ministers who serve under Dr. Evans deserves a section of his own in this study. Most of them have already been named, but let the roll be called again. Dr. C. B. Gahagen, the "minister of shepherding" and a sort of all-round chief of staff, was with Dr. Evans when he was pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh. Dr. W. D. Johnson, "minister of evangelism," has the responsibility of locating and cultivating prospects, preparing them for church membership and recommending them to the session. His work is finished at the moment they receive the right hand of fellowship. At that point Dr. Gahagen takes over. If they are under 40, they become the special responsibility of the Rev. Richard Halverson, "minister of new life." The core of Halverson's work lies in 41 Bible classes meeting monthly, each with an average attendance of about forty.

For those under 18, the "minister of weekday activities," the Rev. Walter James, is the guiding member of the ordained staff. The scope of his work, which deserves an article of its own, may be suggested by a few statistics from his 1949 report: 65 enrolled groups meeting regularly; 116 organized major events—social, athletic and camping; total number of participants 58,981, an average of almost 1,200 a week. The Rev. Clifton Moore has just come to Hollywood as "minister of radio." He is to administer a recent bequest of \$115,000 to expand the church's radio ministry and develop one in television.

Two other members of the staff who cannot be given here the attention they merit are Dr. Charles Hirt, the director of music, and his wife, who assists him. Dr. Hirt, a professor in the music school at the University of Southern California, is nationally known among musicians as an authority on Russian church music. As might be expected, "the Hirts" have developed the six choirs—cathedral (adult), college, chapel (high school), junior high, primary and men's chorus—to a standard of excellence attained in few churches. The Cathedral choir broadcasts frequently for the national chains; last Christmas it exchanged broadcasts by short wave over the British Broadcasting Corporation's facilities with the choir of Westminster Abbey. Barron Smith, the organist, another key figure in the church's music, was formerly at the Westminster Choir College.

Henrietta Mears—Human Dynamo

But the other figure at Hollywood Presbyterian who must be given more than passing attention is Dr. Henrietta C. Mears, the director of Christian education. The Christian Century was unlucky enough to visit the Hollywood church while Miss Mears was away addressing Sunday school con-

ventions. But she was an unseen presence, an offstage voice, felt and heard at every turning. "Miss Mears says . . ." "If Miss Mears were here . . ." "The way Miss Mears handles a problem like this . . ." The Century's representative became so accustomed to replies of this sort that he finally grew to feel as well acquainted with this woman as with any member of the Hollywood staff whom he met in person. She must be a human dynamo.

Twenty-one years ago, when Miss Mears took over the Hollywood Sunday school, it had a few hundred enrolled and a small attendance. Today, as has been said, it enrolls more than 4,000, and records are so carefully kept that if pupils are absent more than a few weeks teachers must provide an acceptable explanation. "Acceptable," says Miss Mears, "means one of three things: (1) The pupil is attending another Sunday school; (2) he has moved out of town; (3) he has moved out of the vicinity of the church, in which case if possible we suggest another church to which he should transfer. Excuses, such as 'The child hasn't been in my class since I have had it,' are not accepted from the teachers. Why hasn't he?" The Sunday school's 309 officers and teachers are sternly held to these standards. They also receive steady teacher training.

Thriving College Department

The most spectacular feature of the church school program is the college department. This starts from scratch with every new academic year, but its membership, drawn from almost all the colleges in the Los Angeles region, builds up so that in some years it reaches 800 by commencement time. Some indications of the demands which it makes on the time and services of these students has already been given, but Miss Mears operates on the principle that the greater the demands the greater the response. And likewise, the greater the effect. In classroom sessions she herself directs intensive Bible study, taking the students through the epistles and other books of the Bible in a verse-by-verse fashion much like that in vogue in the better conservative Bible institutes. "Never insult the intelligence of your students," says Miss Mears. "They are accustomed to hard study in high school and college; give them study just as demanding in Sunday school." Her method seems to work, for her high school and college departments are always crowded, and from the church during this score of years 175 have gone into the ministry and to the mission field.

Interpreting Religious Education

Naturally, a woman who has accomplished as much as this director of Christian education is a subject for much discussion throughout the churches of the area. Is she a fundamentalist? She has that reputation in and around Los Angeles, and the quarterlies which she has prepared for use in some classes of the Hollywood school bear out that impression. Such formal training for church work as she received came from the evangelistic institute of the late Dr. W. B. Riley in Minneapolis. But her real training for her present position was received in the Minneapolis high school, where she served as head of the chemistry department and adviser to seniors. (She was the first to introduce the now familiar advisory system in a large American high school.)

The fact seems to be that in the Hollywood congregation few stop to ask whether or not the director of Christian education is a fundamentalist. Her driving but inspiring personality makes the question seem of minor importance. She can stir the interest and compel the affectionate loyalty of all kinds and conditions of people, including hundreds at an age when church ties frequently dissolve or snap. That satisfies the Hollywood session. When Miss Mears herself attempts to interpret her work in the church, she puts it this way:

The field of Christian education, so far as I am concerned, means first introducing men, women and children to Christ as Savior and Lord, and then training them in the Word of God. I expect to see results both in life and creed.

That last, by the way, is a sentence worth thinking about, especially by those who deplore the tepid quality of much that passes for religious education. To continue Miss Mears' apologia:

Young people must have a reason for the faith that is in them and must know what Christ means when he says that we must leave all and follow him. Christ is the center and circumference of all that we do. He is our life, our witness, our reason for fellowship and our motivation for service. Our challenge never falls short of the lordship of Christ. That is where we stand in our Christian education program.

Our Sunday school is built so that youth can be trained in righteousness. The Bible is our only textbook. Our teachers are men and women who are willing to sign a declaration of faith stating their acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord, the Bible as the infallible Word of God, and the deity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that he is very God.

I consider our duty is to understand youth, but more to help them understand themselves that they may release their varied abilities in service for Christ and the church. I believe young people want to serve and are out on a quest for reality. . . . Knowing that every life must be centered immovably around something or it is swamped and swept by winds of adversity and emotion, we try to strike the stake of the Person of Christ into the center of every life. So much of our modern education builds youth around self. This is the least thing in the world to live for.

All this, The Christian Century is regretfully aware, gives only a partial indication of the pulsing life of the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood. Space limitations make it impossible to tell in detail of many of its aspects—for example, of what goes on in the scores of Bible classes which meet all over the church plant and in numerous homes practically every day and evening in the week, of the summer camps and conferences, of the winter weekend retreats, of the training given the 80 or 90 young people who have avowed their intention of entering church vocations, of the service rendered by a group of young people in European work camps this summer, of the D.P.'s brought from Europe and integrated into American life.

Our report has likewise been forced to forego the color it would have gained from an account of the play, "Christ on Trial," written by Dr. Evans, acted by some of the top stars in the congregation (Dennis Morgan, Virginia Mayo, Rhonda Fleming, Bill Hay of the "Amos and Andy" program, to name a few), played each year to overflow crowds, with several of the top studios now offering to film it. It has told nothing of the way in which the Los Angeles police department uses the church for referrals of drunkards and the California parole board releases prisoners in its care. It has said not a word about the collaboration it is working out with Jimmy Fidler, the radio

commentator, and his foundation for the rehabilitation of dead-end boys. Long-time members of the congregation may complain that more has been left out than is in. It can't be helped; space is a remorseless tyrant.

Conservative But Alive

It is to be hoped, however, that a fairly coherent impression has been given of a great congregation in which, despite its size, the individual remains important. It is a conservative church. Its ministers and members speak the language of traditional piety—but in a way which shows that, for most of them, the often-abused phrases about “knowing God” and “accepting Christ” hold living meaning. It is not without its inner tensions. A visitor may suspect, for instance, that there are Presbyterians in the congregation who would prefer to see Presbyterian teaching materials used throughout the Sunday school. And he may wonder what the members of the highly trained adult choirs think of the “Love lifted me” sort of music in which the evening congregation joins for a quarter-hour before the choir enters.

But the over-all impression, the impression a visitor takes away after a week in this church and finds still vivid enough to blot out all others when later he tries to put his report into words, is of a remarkably united body of Christians. Religion means something to these people—or at least to

those whom the Century met. It means much Bible study, much gathering in praying bands, much public testimony. It means lives changed, homes saved. It means community service of many kinds, especially for youngsters and prisoners and those sliding toward the gutter or in it. The message of this church to those whom it reaches is intensely personal, but it is not without its larger implications. “We must have regenerated individuals before we can have a reconstructed society,” the Century heard Dr. Evans tell his young married couples, “but heaven help us if, after securing the regenerated individuals, we do not go on to reconstruct society.”

Meanwhile, this minister who is more responsible, humanly speaking, than any other factor for the spectacular growth and dynamic life of this congregation continues to drive himself at a killing pace. But when one tries to draw him out on what he has accomplished during the nine years of his pastorate he says, “Do you know, I’ve never before been in a situation in which I seemed so to be looking at myself from the outside. This isn’t something I have done. This is something that has happened. I find myself standing completely off from myself while I watch in this church what the Lord is doing.”

Put down in cold words, does that read like preacher-cant? You wouldn’t feel that way if you could hear Louis Evans say it.

The Century certainly built up this article.

IX. Washington Prairie Evangelical Lutheran Church

Decorah, Iowa

WASHINGTON PRAIRIE Church is the greatest country church I have ever known. It has a program as challenging as that of any city church anywhere.” So answered a neighboring Methodist minister when The Christian Century asked whether he thought this country church located on a gravel road seven miles from a one-train-a-day town in northeastern Iowa deserved a place in this study of great American churches. All the other pastors and civic leaders in that part of Iowa who were interviewed agreed with him.

Why do its neighbors think Washington Prairie Evangelical Lutheran is a great church? Why did so many ministers all over the United States vote for it in the Century’s nationwide poll? Well, there are many reasons given. It has a loyal congregation who carry on a great tradition. It has adequate facilities. Its pastor is not awaiting “promotion” to a city church. Some of those interviewed thought these the major factors.

Religion in Action

Others were sure that Washington Prairie’s success is attributable to a highly developed educational program which produces well indoctrinated Lutherans who are also good Christians. They point out that in its Sunday school children are prepared for confirmation as the most important event in their lives; that after confirmation the church trains its youth so effectively that they grow into adults conscious of their responsibilities to God and community. A neighboring Lutheran pastor observed that Washington Prairie had no activities for activity’s sake. Said he: “Every phase of its work is geared to meet a specific need of its people. Its program is religion in action in the life of the community.”

All these observations are in large measure true. Yet for all its strength, Washington Prairie is a church with many weaknesses. Its strength lies partly in its awareness of and concern over those weaknesses. It prays about them and works to overcome them. Work is expected of every member. And every member expects to work. Prayer is real and natural and constant at Washington Prairie. In the final analysis it is probably this combination of prayer and work that holds the secret of success. There is no attempt at showmanship and there are no sideshows. The church is not a recreation center. It is not a civic club. Not that it is unconcerned about the problems of its community. It is. But primarily Washington Prairie Church is the church.

Washington Prairie Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is located in the open country seven miles from Decorah, Iowa, was chosen in The Christian Century’s poll of 100,000 ministers as the rural or small town church most worthy of study in the northwest quarter of the nation. This includes the following states: Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. Other rural churches frequently voted for in this area were First Baptist, Clark’s Grove, Minnesota, and the South Waterloo, Iowa, Church of the Brethren.

This Lutheran church stands on an eminence in the open country of scenic northeastern Iowa. Its towering steeple, 160 feet high, can be seen for miles around. It is in full view of most of its farmer-parishioners. In the words of one of them, which express the attitude of all, “It’s like it was right here on my farm. It’s the first thing I see every morning when I come out of my door on my way to feed the hogs.” Yet in late August, as one walked around the spacious churchyard, the rich foliage and tall cornstalks of the Iowa hills effectively hid from view all but the roofs of a few distant farmhouses.

It is not alone the symmetry and beauty of the gray stone structure which inspire a worshiper approaching this parish church. It is also the blue sky and the green grass and the evergreen spruces and the grain-laden stalks in neighboring fields. And the silent dignity of a well kept cemetery. The total effect is a pastoral scene that is all any artist could dream up. Here is the country church perfectly blended with its surroundings, an adequate yet unpretentious structure imparting a sense of the ennobling, enduring qualities of the simple faith of its worshipers.

Dairy-Farming Area

The countryside surrounding the church is a dairy-farming area. Sons and grandsons of the Norwegian immigrants who settled here a little over a hundred years ago still till the land and tend the herds. They are not rich and their farms are not large, as the west counts size. Holdings range from 80 to 240 acres. But these Norwegian-descended Americans are good dairy farmers and they live comfortably. Their cultural standards are high, their moral code rigid. They form a homogeneous community, socially and economically. Unquestionably, this homogeneity has been a factor in the development of their church.

It would, however, be an oversimplification to attribute the success of the Washington Prairie Church to this one factor. There are many similar communities. There is hardly another such church among them. The reason for the development of such a church in Washington Prairie lies much deeper than the accident of a homogeneous community. Because that is true, the church continues to have

as effective a ministry today as in the past, despite the almost complete Americanization of the community and the influx of many besides the descendants of the original settlers. A young woman of English descent from Florida who married into the congregation is as much at

home as the oldest daughter of the Norwegian pioneers. The chairman of the church's board of trustees is of German origin. The people of Washington Prairie are no more hyphenated Americans than are Indiana Hoosiers. Yet it was a community of Norwegians who established the traditions on which the present membership builds.

Heritage of Faith

Five or six Norwegians had been employed at Fort Atkinson, Winneshiek county, Iowa, in the period between 1843-48. They had come to work on the Indian reservation which the government had set aside in northern Iowa. They became the forerunners of an influx of Norwegian settlers which grew from 250 in 1850 to more than 28,000 by 1870. Among these were the settlers of Washington Prairie.

It was a long way, in more than one respect, from the orderly valleys and villages of their childhood to what was still an undeveloped part of frontier America. Especially did the Norwegians miss the churches which had been the centers of their lives back home. True, the devout among them gathered in each other's homes for Scripture reading, hymn singing and instruction for the young. But this was not enough. Accustomed to strict religious discipline, they missed the pastor whose spiritual guidance and parish ministry they considered essential to civilized living. No one else could baptize or confirm their children. And no one else would properly perform marriage and last rites.

Settling Washington Prairie in 1850, the newcomers were infrequently visited by two traveling pastors, C. L. Clausen and Nils Brandt. Pastor Brandt confirmed the first class in Washington Prairie in the fall of 1852. Simultaneously, parishes were organized there and in neighboring communities. In all these organizations, the congregations subscribed to the doctrine and faith of the Church of Norway. In October 1852 they joined in issuing a call for a pastor. The call was transmitted to a committee of the Church of Norway delegated to look after the pastoral needs of their emigrated countrymen. It was brought to the attention of a young candidate in theology just graduated by the University of Christiania.

Koren Was a Builder

Ulrik Vilhelm Koren had received degrees in art and philosophy as well as in theology. Scion of an aristocratic family, he was expected to have a bright future in the powerful state church of Norway when he learned of the call from America. A brother of Vilhelm's was to become an admiral in the Norwegian navy. Vilhelm himself might have been expected to attain equal eminence among the state clergy. Friends who tried to dissuade him from what they considered his rash impulse to accept the Iowa call pointed out all the disadvantages of life on the American frontier. He would not be dissuaded. A month later he married the daughter of the rector of Larvik and on September 6, 1853, he and his bride left Norway for Washington Prairie. After a difficult journey, they arrived at their new home on Koren's twenty-seventh birthday, December 22, 1853. There they met the first of the parishioners to whom they were to minister for the next 57 years.

The new pastor and his wife immediately became acquainted with the rugged life of the American frontier. For more than a year they moved about from one parishioner's home to another's. But Koren was a builder. By late 1854, the first small parsonage had been built. (In later years, he was to erect the present commodious—14 rooms!—parsonage.) Then he began to plan for the building of the church. The congregation prayed for guidance. An architect from back east was hired to draw the plans. A quarry with highest quality limestone was located. As time permitted the men of the church quarried and hauled the stone to the site the pastor had chosen. The women prayed for their safety and success.

It was a long, hard struggle. Sometimes the members must have thought the pastor's ideas too grandiose. But finally in 1871 the beautiful church edifice, with a seating capacity of approximately 500 persons, was completed. Their prayers and labors had made it possible. It was theirs in a special, intimate way and they loved it. That love they transmitted to their children and their children's children. It is the most unmistakable fact about the people of Washington Prairie. They love their church, "the walls of her abode."

Larger Relationships

During the early years of his pastorate, Koren ministered to Norwegian Lutherans throughout northeastern Iowa and in the adjacent counties in Minnesota. At one time he had 13,000 souls as his cure. Gradually, however, other pastors arrived and by 1883 he was ministering only to Washington Prairie and two neighboring communities. In the meantime, he had assumed the leadership of the Norwegian Lutherans in America and his load continued heavy. Because of this larger relationship of its pastor, Washington Prairie Church became closely identified with the early history of the Norwegian (now Evangelical) Lutheran Church. It is rightly considered one of the mother churches of this fast-growing denomination.

It was under Pastor Koren's leadership that the small denomination decided to build a college in near-by Decorah. The decision to proceed with the plans for the college was taken in Washington Prairie Church at the first synod meeting to be held west of the Mississippi, in October 1857. Koren's choice of a site for Luther College was in keeping with his choice of the site for the church. It remains a beautiful campus well located on a hill adjacent to the town of Decorah. And the feat of Koren and his cohorts in raising \$150,000 from among poor immigrants who had been in America for only a decade testifies both to the regard in which they were held by their fellow immigrants and to the caliber of those new Americans.

Nor has Washington Prairie lost its close relationship to the college through the passing years. Every Sunday finds professors and students from the college driving out to worship in the country church. And every Washington Prairie farmer, whether an alumnus or not, looks upon Luther College as *his* college.

It is impossible in this study to describe the many contributions in many and varied fields which Dr. Koren made to his church and denomination. He was perhaps the most outstanding theologian his denomination has produced in America. The volumes of sermons which came

from his pen are still to be found in the homes of many Evangelical Lutherans. He left an indelible imprint upon the educational institutions of his denomination. He was a champion of the missionary cause. But primarily he was a pastor who instilled in his flock a concern for the spreading of the gospel, both at home and abroad. Somehow he led those immigrant farmers to believe that they had an essential part in God's plan for man's salvation which could be accomplished through prayer and personal devotion. And the success and contribution of Washington Prairie Church today lie in the fact that the sons and grandsons of those pioneers still believe in that mission and still discipline themselves to its high demands.

Son Joined Father

In 1888, Vilhelm Koren was joined in the work of the parish by his son, Paul. A graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Paul Koren was an able man in his own right both as a parish minister and in denominational leadership. As in many another case, his ministry and his contributions have suffered in comparison with those of his more brilliant father. Serving as his father's assistant from 1888 until the latter's death in 1910, he found more and more of the work of Washington Prairie Church devolving upon him as his father undertook denominational leadership. The younger Koren's ministry, which continued until his retirement in 1941, was characterized by the same devotion—if not by the same brilliance—to congregation, community and the larger interests of the denomination. In 1938, when he reached his golden jubilee year as pastor of the church, the congregation celebrated the 85th anniversary of consecutive and conjunctive service by father and son. By the time of his retirement, the consecutive years of their pastorate had reached 88, which may well be the all-time American record for a father-son pastorate.

Looking back, most Washington Prairie members believe that these long pastorates had both their fortunate and unfortunate aspects. They believe that totally the effect was good in that it made possible the firm implanting and growth of their tradition. They also think that it accounted for the lethargy which descended upon the congregation in the two decades preceding the present pastorate.

A Fortunate Choice

In the period following World War I, many changes came to this small midwestern community. The process of Americanization was almost complete. Few of the second and third generation could speak Norwegian. Their ties with the old country were nebulous. They remained proud of their Norwegian ancestry, but they were Americans, educated in American schools, devoted to American traditions, proud of America's new place in the sun. Some of them had fought for America. They wanted their church life to conform more nearly to the American pattern. Services in the English language were first instituted in 1919. Today Norwegian-language services are held on the first Sunday afternoon of each month, and seldom draw more than 25 worshipers. Washington Prairie people became aware, too, that churches of other denominations, and many in their own denomination, had developed new methods of religious education. They became conscious of

the limitations of their one-room church plant. They began to think of the type of pastor they would call when Paul Koren's advancing years should make necessary his retirement.

When the time came Washington Prairie was particularly fortunate. Through the chance remark of a friend of one of the church's laymen, the committee charged with selecting a pastor learned of a young minister who wanted to devote his life to rural church work. This circumstance led to the acceptance of their call by Oscar E. Engebretson, who came equipped with eleven years' experience and a devotion to country church work. Had experts conducted a scientific test to find the right man for the vacancy, or the right vacancy for the man, they could not have succeeded better. But of Pastor Engebretson, more later. Suffice it now to say that he combines the wide interests of Vilhelm Koren and the pastoral devotion of Paul Koren and adds to the combination a remarkable understanding of rural life and psychology. And a friendly personality. He has taken up where the others left off. Capitalizing on the tradition they created, he has led the Washington Prairie congregation to new heights of achievement.

Strong Educational Program

Washington Prairie Church still holds to Vilhelm Koren's theory that even praying workers need to be well trained. It has developed in this rural area a program of religious education the products of which might well be the envy of many a great urban church, whose director of religious education would lift an eyebrow at Washington Prairie's methods.

To understand this church's program of Christian education, one must first comprehend what Pastor Engebretson means when he says that the church believes in "the family pew." For all educational effort at Washington Prairie centers around that family pew. In fact, the first step in the process begins in that pew. Parents are not simply encouraged, they are expected, to begin bringing their babies to church services as soon as the mother is up and about. "If parents bring their babies to church from the time they are born, by the time they are two years old they cause no trouble at all," Oscar Engebretson says. Certainly those only a few months old caused no trouble on the Sunday The Christian Century attended services.

Informal training begins in the kindergarten of the Sunday school, when the children are three or four years old. This meets from April 1 through Christmas. Formal training starts when the child is 6 and continues until he graduates from the high school department at about 18. And this is no playschool affair. The children know that they are in Sunday school for Christian education. They are expected to study hard. They do—and like it.

From primary class on through to graduation, study is largely centered around the catechism. As the child advances in school, his Sunday school textbooks (and they are just that) keep pace with his ability to read and understand. From simple Bible stories the lessons progress into studies of the Old and New Testaments, church history, creed and doctrine. In addition to Sunday sessions, each child in grades 1 to 8 (ages 6 to 14) is expected to attend vacation church school. This is similar to the daily vacation Bible school in most other churches only in that it meets for

three weeks during summer vacation. Where most D.V.-B.S.'s go in for informal study and recreation, Washington Prairie children get 3 hours of formal class work. They study the Bible, the catechism, missions and hymns in a course which Pastor Engebretson has worked out for use throughout the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Confirmation Emphasized

During the period the child is in the 7th and 8th study years (roughly at ages 13 and 14), he is required to attend the pastor's confirmation class. These classes meet for two hours on Saturday mornings throughout the year. The basic text used is an explanation of the catechism and the Gospels. Each child is required to memorize Luther's answers to the catechism's questions, plus proof passages from Scripture. When the Century's representative pointed out that many leading religious and secular educators question the value of this type of educational technique, Pastor Engebretson replied, "The greatest periods in the history of any country have occurred simultaneously with their maximum stressing of memory work."

Of course some children are not capable of memorizing the entire catechism. All Washington Prairie asks is that each do his best. "Our greatest joy at public catechization has come when some boy or girl of very limited ability has made the great effort to learn just one answer," the pastor says.

The public catechization to which he referred is held each year, usually on the Friday before Confirmation Sunday. Each child who has met the requirements of attendance and application during the two-year course is presented to a congregational meeting for public questioning on the catechism. Those whom the pastor sends to this meeting almost always pass the final test and are confirmed the following Sunday. But sometimes Pastor Engebretson requires a pupil who has been grossly negligent in attendance or application to attend his classes an additional year.

To understand how the church can exert this discipline over its children, one must bear in mind the fact that in Washington Prairie confirmation is a great event. In nearly every parishioner's home pictures of confirmation classes are prominently displayed. It is safe to say that almost every Washington Prairie communicant, if he were faced with a choice as to whether he would prefer his child to be a confirmed member of the church or a high school graduate, would choose the former.

Youth Activities

After confirmation, the youth of the church enter the high school Bible class of the Sunday school. This class is divided into two sections, the first year being taught by a layman, the other three years by the pastor. The courses are alternated from year to year so that each confirmant completes the whole course before graduation. This year Pastor Engebretson is using a new workbook on Acts which he is developing for use throughout the denomination. Other courses include studies of the life of Christ, of the organization and function of the church and of practical problems faced by youth of high school age.

The church sponsors no weekday activities for its youth

apart from its teaching program. At first this appears to be a weakness in its educational program. Actually, it is not. Almost every youth in the congregation is a member of a 4-H club. Pastor Engebretson and many of the laymen of the church take an active interest in the work of these clubs. Many of the meetings and social functions of the groups are held in the church. Indeed, this active church interest makes it almost impossible to differentiate between church-sponsored and "community-sponsored" activities in the Washington Prairie community. In 4-H club work the results speak for themselves. The local groups are recognized as some of the best in the state. Numbers of Washington Prairie boys and girls have won statewide recognition. Local 4-H leaders waxed eloquent when The Christian Century asked whether the church's active interest had played an important part in the high development of 4-H club work in the Washington Prairie community.

Aside from 4-H clubs, there are no other organized weekday activities for the youth of the community. There are no boy or girl scouts or hobby groups. The boys and girls are so wrapped up in their 4-H farm projects that there is no time or need for other activities. The church does hope that it can develop a more effective choir program for its youth and children.

It may be that this is as good a place as any to note that the music program is the most noticeable weakness at Washington Prairie. Lack of effective musical leadership is apparent in every department. A rather haphazard scheduling calls for the men of the church to provide the special music on the first Sunday, the women on the second Sunday, a soloist on the third Sunday and the intermediates on the fourth Sunday of each month. None of the church's musical organizations gives any evidence of musical training. A part of the explanation for this lack undoubtedly lies in the fact that most of the children attend one-room public schools where the teacher lacks the time and probably the ability to teach music.

Baseball a Popular Game

There is, however, another community activity in which the church is greatly interested—baseball. Almost all the young men and many of the young women of the church play on baseball or softball teams which, though not church-sponsored, are church-centered, and most of the congregation are enthusiastic rooters. No, this is not a weekday sport; it is a Sunday afternoon activity. The Washington Prairie congregation frowns on card playing, dancing and drinking, but it goes all out for Sunday afternoon baseball. Both of the pastor's teen-aged sons play and the pastor is the congregation's leading rooter. Neither pastor nor people are Sabbatharians in any strict sense. Given their general social and theological conservatism, not only their Sunday baseball but also the practice of selling refreshments at Sunday evening Luther League socials comes to a visitor as somewhat of a surprise.

The Luther League deserves special mention as an adjunct of the church's educational program. It meets twice a month on Sunday evenings. (There are no evening services.) One meeting is strictly for the youth of the church; the other is a special program to which the adults of the church and the public generally are invited. These meetings are opportunities for training in parliamentary

procedure and public speaking as well as for religious instruction. Often the public program is a forum with a guest speaker and a question period. An outsider attending one of these programs is impressed by the self-possession of the young people who participate. In fact, every contact with the youth of Washington Prairie Church leaves a favorable impression of the end results of the church's educational program.

One interesting feature of the church's work with youth is the large number of young people who belong to the Pocket Testament Movement. This movement originated in England and is interdenominational. Each member promises to read a chapter of the Bible every day. He also promises to witness to the fact that he is a Christian by reading in public places. Once a year the young people of the church are given a chance to sign up as members of the movement.

The Sunday school has no classes for adults. This is a weakness in the program of the church which is somewhat mitigated by a strong Ladies Aid program for older women, an unusually active Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation organization among the younger women, and a fairly active men's brotherhood. Washington Prairie is self-conscious about the weakness of its adult program. Plans are being made to strengthen this area of the church's ministry.

Adequate Facilities

Sunday school organization is improving rapidly since the building of the parish hall in 1948. Before that, all classes met in the church auditorium.

The story of the building of the parish hall is an epic of daring and sacrifice. While Washington Prairie has 590 baptized members, its confirmed membership is only 440. That means there are approximately 160 families in the church. For 160 farm families of modest means to plan and pay for a \$130,000 addition to their church plant is a magnificent achievement. Washington Prairie farmers did just that. In addition, they redecorated their church and installed a new heating system. To duplicate the church plant they now have would easily cost \$250,000. How have so few farm families done such a remarkable job?

Prayer, work and sacrificial giving have made possible the adequate structure Washington Prairie now possesses. In describing the undertaking, Pastor Engebretson says: "It was constantly stressed that prayer must be our daily support. It was remembered that 'if the Lord build not the house they labor in vain who build it.' Daily during the house they labor in vain who build it. Daily during the years of planning and building uncounted prayers ascended to God asking his benediction on our task. We wanted the building to be for us all a spiritual service and a spiritual experience."

The decision to build the long needed educational plant was made at a congregational meeting on October 13, 1943. Members of the congregation were asked to buy government bonds to give to the church building fund. The amount thus received was added to a fund the Ladies Aid had been raising for the purpose over many years. But the total was far from enough to warrant a beginning. It was decided that a general solicitation of the congregation would be made in October 1945. Thirty thousand dollars

was pledged during the campaign. The building committee felt it could proceed.

Follow Fathers' Example

From the beginning it had been agreed that the men of the church would follow the example of their fathers by doing all possible work themselves. The first step was to procure the stone necessary for the wall. After considerable search, stone similar to that used in building the church was located six miles away on the farm of a member. The family promptly made a gift of all the stone necessary.

Machinery was then procured to clear the earth away from the top layers of rock so that the quarrying could begin. Most of the rock was taken out in the winter of 1946. Groups of men, from ten to twenty in number, volunteered for work in the quarry. Quarrying is hard and dangerous work, and the men were inexperienced. Yet only minor injuries occurred. Members who owned trucks helped in hauling the stone, often remembering the pioneer fathers who hauled the stone for the church by wagons and sledges drawn by horses and oxen.

Many times the problems seemed almost insurmountable. Difficulties arose in getting permits to purchase materials, then subject to wartime restrictions. Prices went up sharply, necessitating new appeals to the congregation. Plans had to be altered because of unforeseen difficulties in digging the foundation. But still the men of the church labored on, and still the congregation prayed.

Perhaps the most memorable day during the construction was that when the steel beams to support the roof were put in place. A contractor had agreed to bring a crane to hoist the beams. At the last minute it was learned that he could not come. It was late fall and the beams had to be put in place if the roof was to go on before winter. The men decided to do the job themselves. One look at the size and length of those beams might well have deterred ordinary men. But not those of Washington Prairie. Girded by the knowledge of the prayers their wives and children were offering for their safety, and helped by the skill that farming develops in handling heavy objects and managing pulleys, they set to work. For two days 21 men labored at the job.

A Memorable Day

On October 22 the final beam was in place. On that day, too, the stone masons laid the last block of the partitions and the steeplejack completed his work on the steeple. Throughout the operation the weather had been almost perfect. But on October 23 the rains came. The weather had stayed good just long enough to allow the basic work to be completed. It may have been coincidence. But to the folk of Washington Prairie it was the providence of God in answer to their prayers.

From then on the weather was bad. But the roof joists and boards had to be laid to protect the building. Some of this work was done in the rain, and on some days the snow swirled across the roof as the determined men worked on.

The next spring and summer found the men working in the church. But it was November 21 before the redecorated church was ready for services. A remarkable thing happened that day. It was already known that the

building fund was \$7,000 in the red. Yet the people decided that their first offering in the redecorated sanctuary should be a thank offering for missions in gratitude to God for his mercy and blessings toward them. That offering amounted to \$1,528! Then on the first Sunday in the new year 1949, the congregation was asked to give sacrificially to wipe out the remaining deficit. When the offering was counted, it was found to be a few dollars in excess of the sum needed.

By April 1949, the parish hall had been completed and paid for. Sacrificial giving and sacrificial labor made it possible. Some men neglected their crops in a boom year so that the work might be finished. Every workday the women of the church prepared lunch for the workers. In such ways they pared down the cost by more than half. And they had erected an adequate and beautiful building. But they had done more. Their toil and sweat and prayers had been built into the church. It was God's and theirs in a special, mutual way.

Community-Consciousness

The uses to which the new parish hall auditorium has been put point up in a significant manner the close tie between Washington Prairie and its community. Not only 4-H clubbers meet there, but also cooperatives, community organizations and any other groups that might properly meet in a church building. The one ban is on political meetings.

It is not difficult to understand this ban. The political complexion of Washington Prairie has been changing in recent years and sometimes political meetings engender a good deal of heat. A few years ago most of the farmers were Republicans. Now many of them vote Democratic. This probably does not represent any ideological change. It is more likely a matter of bread and butter. All the farmers remember the bitter experiences of the early thirties. Some of them cling to their traditional Republican loyalty, but others have changed.

One of the amazing things about Pastor Engebretson is his complete identification with the farmers he serves. In fact, he is a farmer. The parsonage has a plot of 67 acres which he and his boys farm in a limited way. The out-buildings and hedgerows look about as one would expect a preacher's farm to look. (The Christian Century wondered why some of his farmer parishioners didn't drop around for a few days of voluntary labor to make some repairs and slap on a little paint here and there. And when they get around to it, they might modernize the parsonage a bit more. It's not quite in keeping with the church and parish hall.) But this bit of farming does help the pastor know more about the problems of his people. It helps him speak their language, in pulpit and out. Oscar Engebretson pulls no punches about what he thinks. And what he thinks soon becomes the point of view of his parishioners.

Washington Prairie farmers believe that conservation of the soil is a moral issue, a matter of Christian stewardship. They believe that no generation has a right to destroy what God has given to all generations. Most of them agree with their pastor in thinking that government subsidies, if they must be given, should be restricted to farmers who practice soil conservation. "A man should not be paid

to deplete his country's soil," Pastor Engebretson says. He says such things on pastoral calls and he says them from the pulpit. County Agent E. J. Weigle told The Christian Century that Pastor Engebretson's conviction that soil wastage is a sin has had telling effect among his parishioners. Their record in soil conservation practices is the best in the county and is not excelled in the state. Mr. Weigle said that he knows of no farmers more cooperative with farm bureau programs than those of Washington Prairie.

Rural Leadership Training

Pastor Engebretson is no yes-man for government farm-policy makers. He has reservations about farm subsidies. Ideally he would like to see a man get a fair return for his labor. He was a pastor in North Dakota in '32 and '33 when wheat sold for 19 cents a bushel. That must not happen again. But he doesn't like to see any special group favored above others. He is wary of government controls. If the government pays a subsidy, it will impose controls. Certainly some controls are needed. But it would be far better for the controls to be self-imposed by the farmers. So this pastor reasons.

Mr. Engebretson's interest in lifting the level of farm life has made him an advocate of special rural leadership training in liberal arts colleges. He feels that the number of farm youth who can attend agricultural colleges will always be small. He believes that liberal arts colleges, particularly the denominationally supported schools, should provide a shorter course of study for farm youth, designed to contribute to the enrichment of life in rural communities. He says that, properly organized and staffed, such courses would bring the student to realize the opportunity for service to church and society.

He and other interested persons have convinced Luther College that there is a place for such a program in the small liberal arts college. This fall Luther is introducing a two-year program in rural leadership training. Washington Prairie parents like the idea and plan to cooperate. Unfortunately the war in Korea has blocked any large development of the program this year. But it is for leadership in ventures like this that Evangelical Lutherans look to Washington Prairie and its pastor.

Washington Prairie's social concern is not exclusively related to problems of agriculture. Its farmers have no close contact with situations of tension in the areas of race and labor relations. But they are concerned about them, if for no other reason than that the pastor often mentions them in his sermons.

Missions-Minded

These Iowa farmers have been deeply disturbed by the international situation. Their boys went to war—one failed to come back—and returned telling of the destruction and the need they had seen. Washington Prairie people sought ways to help. They were told that many D.P.'s wanted homes on American farms. Quickly they gave 11 assurances of homes and subsistence. But church agencies have not been able to provide all the families for whom guarantees were made, including a family to live in the parsonage and work on the pastor's farm. All except one family who have come have escaped to the city as soon as possible. The experience has been disappointing. But, it

can be recorded, the parishioners have had another, happier experience. They participated heavily in CROP. From their farms have gone thousands of dollars' worth of supplies for the world's needy, and they have increased their missionary giving in these postwar years. Always missions-minded, it is significant that in 1948, the year when their building program was at its height and the local cost of living reached a record peak, Washington Prairie gave more to home and foreign missions than ever before in its history. That year the congregation gave almost \$1,000 more than their denomination apportioned them. In every year since they have gone far over their goal. They have also considerably exceeded each asking from Lutheran World Action.

Follow Denominational Programs

This country church is a great church because it exploits its denomination's program to the fullest extent and then goes beyond it. The Evangelical Lutheran Church is one of the fastest-growing denominations in America. It is not without its growing pains.

Norwegian settlers in America were originally divided into three groups: the Norwegian Synod, the United Church and the Hauge Synod. The Norwegian Synod was high church and closely patterned its practices after those of the Church of Norway. The Hauge Synod was low church. It was an outgrowth of the pietist movement in the mother church. The United Church combined features of both the others. In 1917 the three groups united to form the Norwegian Lutheran Church. (A small splinter movement developed in the Norwegian Synod and refused to go into the union. This continues to use the name and maintains a close relationship to the Missouri Synod.) As the years have passed, the ties with the Church of Norway have become more tenuous until now there is very little relation between the American descendants and the mother church. A part of this development is due to differences in theological and social outlook. The Church of Norway has become quite liberal both theologically and socially. The Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, perhaps in an attempt to conserve its heritage, developed a greater conservatism than ever existed in the mother church. And it has not shared the Church of Norway's devotion to the ecumenical movement. Today Norwegian church leaders, such as Bishops Eivind Berggrav and Arne Fjellbu (the latter grew up in Decorah), are leaders in the World Council of Churches. Their church's American offspring has some years of development yet ahead before it will join them in that movement. But all the indications are that it is headed in that direction.

In 1948, the Norwegian Lutheran Church changed its name to "Evangelical Lutheran Church." It no longer confines its efforts to working among Norwegians. Because of statesmanlike home missions strategy, it is experiencing phenomenal growth. A member of the American Lutheran Conference, it is now considering a three-way merger with the American Lutheran Church and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church.

But the E.L.C. has been so preoccupied with its own development and is so new to its role as a major denomination that it has not yet developed a fully ecumenical spirit. This is a situation that time and growth are rapidly

changing. Currently, however, the parochial past is still an encumbrance to be overcome. Local churches and local pastors are often more ecumenical in spirit and in practice than is the denomination.

A Good Shepherd

Oscar Engebretson has woven in and out of this story as we have attempted to discover the sources of Washington Prairie's greatness. He is intimately connected with every phase of parish life. Reared in a Norwegian Lutheran home, he is a good denominationalist. But his vision and interests are ecumenical. The cooperative outlook and spirit of Washington Prairie Church are a reflection of his outlook and spirit. One must know him to understand the church.

Forty-five years old, he was born in Whalan, Minnesota. He received his education at Luther Academy, Albert Lea, Minnesota; Luther College, Decorah, Iowa; and Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota. Ordained to the ministry in 1930, he had served pastorates in Rolette and Walcott, North Dakota, before accepting the call to Washington Prairie.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church has come to look to him for leadership in Christian education and in rural work. He has served as a member of the denomination's rapidly developing board of education since 1944. He has been active in efforts to improve the Sunday school curriculum and has written lesson material. He also serves on the Evangelical Lutheran rural life commission. Many articles on the rural church and other subjects have come from his pen. As a preacher, his style and accent are reminiscent of Peter Marshall's.

Called to some of the largest churches of his denomination, Engebretson has stayed in the country both because he likes rural life and because of a sense of mission. Sharing that love and mission are a city girl he met in seminary days, the former Irene Lembke, and three sturdy boys: Conrad, 17 and a senior in high school; Henrik, 15, who wants to be a football coach; and Mark, 3, a friendly towhead.

Church Shares Vision

Oscar Engebretson is one of the younger clergymen of the denomination who are reaching out after larger fellowship. And Washington Prairie shares his vision. This is evidenced by its enthusiastic endorsement of the pastor's participation in such interdenominational movements as the Rural Life Conference and the World Sunday School Association. The congregation also takes pride that in his relationship with his brother ministers of other denominations around Decorah their pastor is most friendly and cooperative. He is probably the most popular minister in the county with his fellow clerics. He gives departing members letters of transfer to other denominations, a practice foreign to most Evangelical Lutheran pastors in that area. But he adheres strictly to a closed altar and a closed pulpit. And he voted against his denomination's participation in both the World Council and National Council of Churches.

Engebretson is liberal in his social and economic views. He is ultraconservative theologically. In a smaller man, these apparent contradictions could lead to confusion and

distraction. In Oscar Engebretson they blend and balance. That is why the local Methodist pastor could say, "If I were a Lutheran seeking a pastor, I'd try to get Oscar Engebretson. He is a great soul with a gripping message."

What effect do these conflicting tendencies have upon the congregation that follows his leadership so closely? The answer is easily obtained. The congregation follows him in his conservative theology and in his liberal practices. It would be difficult to find a church with a "sounder" theology. Few congregations would surpass it in ecumenicity of spirit. In all its relations both with its sister Evangelical Lutheran churches and with those of other denominations it is completely cooperative. If its laity ever really came to realize what is implied in the fact of their closed pulpit—which they have not done—they would be embarrassed. If the Luther League ever discussed the World Council or the National Council—it never has—its members would almost certainly approve the idea. The unavoidable conclusion that an observer from the outside reaches is that Washington Prairie is essentially ecumenical in spirit, even though many of its practices seem to deny it.

Washington Prairie has so venerable a tradition, so im-

pressive an edifice, so efficient an organization, so zealous a concern for missions that it would be easy for the casual observer to attribute its greatness to any one or to all of these facts. Actually they are the results, not the causes of greatness. Underlying all these accomplishments is the reality of the church's intimate relationship to God. God is no nebulous, undefined force so far as the people of Washington Prairie are concerned. He is very real and very near. And he is always approachable. Prayer at Washington Prairie Church is no vestigial formality. It is intimate conversation with a heavenly Father who has time to listen and who wants to help. It is this faith and this practice that undergird all the church's plans and programs. Prayer made possible its adequate structure. And prayer sustains its effective educational system, its intimate relation to the whole life of the community in which it is located, and its concern for missions. It is a successful church because it is a praying church.

Washington Prairie Evangelical Lutheran Church deserves a place among the great churches of America. It is great in that it is growing. It is great in its dissatisfaction with the job that it is doing. But it is greatest in the simplicity of its faith in God.

X. First Presbyterian Church

Topeka, Kansas

TODAY, many churches in America find themselves faced by a new challenge. Young men and women confront them who have discovered that their lives lack a center around which to build a satisfactory existence. In their search for such a center, many of these young people turn to the churches which they attended in childhood, but which have meant little to them during the years while they were getting an education, starting their careers, fighting a war, founding their families. As a city church council leader puts it: "They are looking for something to tie to, and they hope the church will prove to have it. They are seeking something not in emotional terms, but in hard, honest fact. Above all, they are not 'lost souls,' and churches which respond by launching revivals to 'save' them are only driving them back into indifference."

To answer this challenge, some churches are making new efforts to demonstrate the resources religion has to offer. These are the churches whose members are moving over in the pews, on the session or the vestry, to make room for energetic younger newcomers who have decided they want what the church has to offer and are willing to give themselves in return.

The Challenge Answered

One church which has met this new challenge with such success that it finds its facilities crowded with young couples and with children who are giving new vitality to its entire life is First Presbyterian of Topeka, capital city of Kansas. When *The Christian Century* asked the Protestant ministers of the nation to name the churches whose contributions to their communities most deserve study, this church was chosen as the representative from cities in the 10,000-to-100,000 population category for the southwest area of the nation.

First Presbyterian is not the largest Protestant congregation in Kansas, nor in Topeka. Neither is it the oldest. Neither does it have the newest or finest building. But through the years it has developed an enviable reputation for leadership in denominational enterprises, particularly in giving to missions and in movements for civic betterment. It has been famous as the home church of many leaders in the city and state—legislators, judges, lawyers, doctors, merchants. No wonder, then, that First Church came to be proud of its past. Too proud, perhaps, say some of those who saw it begin to decline in vitality during the thirties. "It may be," says one,

"that we had become too smug, too willing to rest on our laurels, that we had forgotten our church had a mission to serve everyone, not just our precious selves."

In a Changing Neighborhood

At any rate, around 1940 the congregation took stock of itself. By that time the church's decline had become serious. Perhaps, some leaders argued, it should move from its downtown location into one of the prosperous residential areas in which most of the members now lived. Still, others objected, a part of the church's unique place in Kansas Presbyterianism had come from its situation across the street from the state capitol, accessible to Presbyterians on their legislative or business visits to Topeka. Perhaps the church should stay where it was, but with a drastic change in emphasis. It could cease to be a "family" church and become simply a pulpit center, with its religious education program relegated to a minor role. (The Sunday school had shrunk to 300 pupils from a high of 1,320 a quarter-century before.) The idea caught on.

This idea of a downtown preaching center was the plan for the future when Orlo Choguill, the present minister, was called to the pulpit in 1945.

In the meantime—"providentially," older members tell you today—Topeka itself was changing. During the war, thousands of newcomers flocked into the city to work in the wartime industries, to man the military installations near by. With the end of the war, many of these decided to stay, for work was plentiful and well paid, living comfortable. In contrast to many war-born cities, Topeka's permanent population kept right on growing after peace returned. Twenty-four new industrial plants came to town. During the 1940-50 decade, the city's population grew from 67,883 to approximately 90,000.

Of course, the same thing happened to the downtown district of Topeka that has happened in a hundred other cities. The once fine residences in the area around First Presbyterian for the most part were taken over as offices or remodeled into apartment and rooming houses. Into them moved the young people who had come to work in the new industries and offices. On Sunday mornings, the new minister discovered, many of them were finding their way into First Church's pews. They remained strangers to the membership at large. But they came back again and again. Evidently they were finding in the earnest sermons they heard from the First

The First Presbyterian Church of Topeka, Kansas, was chosen in The Christian Century's poll of 100,000 ministers as the church in a city of medium size in the southwest quarter of the nation most worthy of study. Included in the balloting in this category were churches in California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, Arkansas and Louisiana. Other churches frequently voted for were the First Methodist Church of Topeka, the Central Methodist Church of Phoenix, Arizona, and the First Methodist Church of Pasadena, California.

Church pulpit the kind of practical help they were seeking.

As the months passed, many of the newcomers became firmly established in their jobs and were able to move from the crowded neighborhood into homes of their own in the newer residential sections. Still they came back to First Church on Sunday mornings. As their babies grew out of the toddling stage, they brought them to Sunday school. Instead of fading away, as had been predicted, the school enrollment began to move upward from its 300 mark. Today it totals 737.

No More Talk of a 'Pulpit Center'

The congregation and its pastor faced the implications of the new situation together. It was apparent that the plan of making First Church simply a pulpit center, attractive to visitors to the city and to persons willing to drive downtown for the sake of the church's reputation, was no longer relevant to the actual situation which had developed and would have to go by the boards. But if that plan did not fit the conditions with which the church had to deal, what plan would? Gradually the answer was worked out.

To begin with, First Church began to get acquainted with the young couples who were flocking to its Sunday morning worship services. An energetic committee was formed to make home calls and present the case for permanent membership. When interest was shown, Dr. Choguill followed up the committee's approach with a personal presentation. As a consequence, the membership rolls began to mount. In the five years since the change in program was adopted, around 700 new members have joined the church. Today the total membership is 1,771. This represents a net gain of 470. Some 230 have left, mainly by transfer; young people "on the way up" often find themselves shifted to other cities. For that reason, a congregation such as that which now fills First Church cannot be considered a stable one. There are always unexpected gaps developing in the church's constituency and working personnel. "It just means we all have to work that much harder," says the young man who serves as chairman of the membership committee.

Visitors Become Members

Today, First Church draws the greatest share of its new members from among those strangers who "just drop in" for Sunday morning services. The second-greatest source is among parents who have not previously paid much attention to churchgoing but who bring their children to Sunday school and learn that the church has something to offer them as well. A third group is made up of those whose interest has been aroused by present members who are themselves so "sold" on First Church that they make a special effort to bring in new acquaintances with no church affiliation.

Longtime First Church members are understandably a bit bewildered by this influx of new faces. "I just don't know any of the people who sit around me on Sunday mornings these days," one said recently. But they all agree that "it is wonderful." The Presbyterian affiliation is not stressed as strongly as in former years. Before they are accepted by the session and taken into Presbyterian membership, the newcomers constitute what almost amounts to a National Council of Churches in miniature. No figures

have been compiled, but a random check of typical pages in the accession book indicates that while about 45 per cent of those listed were formerly Presbyterians, 38 per cent belonged to some other denomination, and 17 per cent to no church at all. Among the 63 who joined on Easter Sunday this year, 3 were formerly Roman Catholics. All are given a copy of *Know Your Church!*—the comprehensive little book on denominational history prepared by the Presbyterian, U.S.A., Board of Christian Education—but no intensive effort is made to stress their Presbyterian status.

Once they become a part of First Church, new members are given every opportunity to put their talents to work on its behalf. Today one finds them on every board and committee. The majority of the men who serve as the session are in their forties, and a number come from the group which has joined the church during the past five years. The elder who is chairman of the important education committee, a civil engineer, is one of these.

A Healthy Sunday School

First Church envisions the foundations on which it must base its future program as (1) a strong Sunday school, in which parents will be deeply interested and in which they will cooperate, and (2) a program to win the active participation of the hundreds of young unattached adults who live in the area. The first function is being admirably fulfilled; the second so far is only a dream, but groups are meeting regularly to plan how it may be realized.

Topekans who have to do with the education program at First Church today invariably tell you that the healthy condition of the Sunday school is in large measure due to the efforts of Mrs. Robert Haury, who came in as religious education director from public school work at the beginning of Dr. Choguill's pastorate. She devoted nearly every afternoon and evening to calling on parents who had enrolled their children in Sunday school or had indicated that they were interested in doing so. In this way, she enlisted active parent participation in the total religious education program of the church. Later, she found in the new Presbyterian, U.S.A., curriculum, with its emphasis on parent-teacher cooperation, a ready-made ally.

Mrs. Haury left First Church two years ago when her husband was transferred to another city, but the energetic program she launched is going ahead undiminished under the direction of her successor, Joyce Resler, with the help of a hard-working education committee. Miss Resler and Ruth Locke, the busy office secretary, are both daughters of Methodist ministers, and so help to deepen First Church's ecumenical tinge. Their belief in and loyalty to the Presbyterian endeavor of which they are part could not be more wholehearted.

First Church's Sunday school was the first in Topeka to be completely graded. Today it is organized into seven departments, with 72 teachers. Everyone agrees that what goes on at the quarterly parent-teachers night, when the curriculum for the coming three months is discussed, has much to do with the church school's success.

A symbol of the upsurge of lay interest in the affairs of First Church is the Intercessors class in the Sunday school. Three years ago this "young adults" class had only eight or nine couples enrolled. Then, after parents of children in

the church school became interested in finding a place for themselves in its program, the membership began to grow. Today from eighty to a hundred couples crowd the little chapel on Sunday mornings for Bible study led by the vice-principal of the Topeka high school. Older members of the church express amazement that the Sunday session attracts as many attendants as does the monthly social evening the class sponsors. Once a month, also, the men become baby-sitters while their wives meet to make garments for the church's relief program.

An even more tangible indication of the enthusiasm of First Church's members for what they find within its walls is the readiness with which they contribute to its support. Half the regular budget (it has doubled since 1945 to \$45,000) is pledged in response to one letter sent to the membership. The rest, except for a minute portion, comes in after the single follow-up appeal. Fewer than one-half of one per cent of the members fail to pay their pledges. The average pledge is \$55—in a church which now has few members who could be described as wealthy.

The women of First Church are organized into a service guild made up of thirteen groups which enroll around 800 members. They meet twice monthly, once as separate groups, once jointly. Three of the groups—two composed of businesswomen, one of "preschool mothers"—meet at night.

Although theoretically missionary interests have been integrated into the total guild program, so many of the older women insist on a separate program for this phase of their work that a special period of mission study is provided on the mornings of the joint meeting day.

A Bible Class with a Mission

Sooner or later, the visitor to First Church is sure to hear of the special accomplishments of the Beta Sigma and Mizpah Bible classes, made up of older women in the congregation. Their Sunday morning Bible study is only part of their story, which is mainly concerned with the active and fruitful program of missionary and social service that they carry on throughout the week.

The Mizpah class started out a half-century ago as a group of preschool mothers; today its members' ages range from 60 to 95. In the years immediately following World War II, these women each week sent a box of food and clothing to families in Europe whose names they obtained from denominational headquarters. This was in addition to their regular contributions to home mission projects. Last year they shipped 23 boxes of food and clothing to families in France and Germany. One of the church's prized possessions is a leather bound, hand lettered copy of the first translation of the Bible into Persian. An heirloom in a French Protestant family, it was presented to the Mizpah class "in token of gratefulness for help in time of great trouble."

Twenty years ago one of the women in this remarkable Bible class had her heart mightily stirred by an appeal from the American Mission to Lepers. She at once launched a one-woman crusade to raise funds for the leper missions. As a result, for the past two decades the Mizpah class has contributed more than any other single group in the nation to this particular cause.

Most of First Church's social service effort is channeled

through Redden Chapel, a neat, white-painted building in the center of Topeka's slum area south of the river. There, under the direction of Margaret Cummings, an active weekday program of classes and interest groups is conducted for the women of the neighborhood. As individuals and as groups, members of First Church contribute to this program.

Redden Chapel—Social Service Outpost

Redden Chapel is more than a settlement house. It is a regularly organized church, with a membership—unique for Topeka—made up of both whites and Mexicans. A few Negroes, too, take part in its weekday activities. Miss Cummings conducts a church school at the chapel on Sunday afternoons, and supervises a thriving interracial vacation Bible school each summer. Dr. Choguill goes twice a month to lead a Sunday afternoon worship service at the chapel, and is often there for communion services, weddings, funerals or baptisms.

"This outpost is good for First Church," he says. "When I recall how the congregation has kept Redden Chapel going for sixty years, sent volunteer workers down week after week and contributed to the social service program Miss Cummings conducts in the neighborhood, I don't feel quite so guilty about the expensive teacups we have in the parlor cupboards at the church uptown."

Redden Chapel came into being because of the passionate interest in the Sunday school movement that Dr. Joseph Redden, a member of First Church, developed back in the eighties. On his return from the World Sunday School Convention at London in 1889, he established what was then known as the First Avenue Mission. In his will he provided a bequest to maintain it and start on a permanent building. After his death, First Church decided to make the mission its social service outpost, and renamed it in memory of the physician.

Through the years First Church has been responsible also for establishing other daughter congregations. Another of Dr. Redden's Sunday school outposts grew into what is today Westminster Presbyterian Church, which occupies a handsome edifice near Washburn University. Second and Third Presbyterian churches were founded as the result of efforts by interested members of First Church, and Oakland Presbyterian came into being with its blessing and encouragement.

A Source of Inspiration

From the membership of this church there has flowed through the years a lively stream of leadership to serve the religious and civic life of the state, the nation and the world. Stephen S. Estey, who occupied the pulpit from 1904 to 1929, was one of the first men from west of the Mississippi to serve on the Presbyterian, U.S.A., General Council. Before they left to become, respectively, the executive of the National Council of Presbyterian Men and the president of the national Presbyterian women's organization, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Moser were active members of the congregation. Dr. Samuel J. Crumbine, whose life has been one long crusade for the adoption of measures to improve public health and who until his retirement headed the American Child Health Association, has testified that the inspiration for his devotion to the public good came

from his early association with First Presbyterian Church of Topeka.

The famous family of Menningers, Topeka psychiatrists, has long been associated with this church. The therapy and training which these physicians direct not only in their own world-famous clinic but also in the state mental hospital and in the Veterans Administration's Winter General hospital utilizes religion as a vital technique—the first such program to do so. The four-year weekday Bible study course which Mrs. C. F. Menninger originated in 1897 grew until hundreds of women were enrolled in its classes at First Church and at other centers. Later the course was published in book form and its direction assumed by the Y.W.C.A. Today these courses, conducted somewhat along the lines of the "Great Books" courses, are still enrolling hundreds.

Topeka's First Presbyterian Church has been widely known for its loyal support of the denomination's missionary program. A survey of the financial statistics from 1888 through 1934 reveals that in twenty of those years the giving for benevolences, including missions, was around half of the amount expended for all other purposes. In the recent Presbyterian, U.S.A., Restoration Fund drive, the congregation's quota was set at \$24,000. The session sent out only one letter to the membership on the subject, but \$25,810 was pledged immediately. This later grew to over \$30,000. In this response, as in many another, First Church of Topeka "led the pack," and the rest of Kansas Presbyterianism was inspired to follow the lead.

In the ten years following 1889, eleven young people went out from this congregation to enter missionary service. They found their inspiration in what was known at its founding in 1883 as the "Young Ladies Missionary Society." Later men were admitted, and the membership grew from 16 to 300. Three of the older women formed a group to pray that God might raise up workers for the missionary field. Their devotion was put to the test when children of all three volunteered for missionary duty, but they did not shrink. Today, those eleven volunteers are dead, after distinguished service in China and Korea, but seven grandchildren of the first three to go—three Adamses, two Bairds and two Silvers—are serving on the foreign field. In the story of Korean missions, particularly, the names Baird and Adams have been famous.

Faith in the Future Compels Renovation

In the mid-forties, as the 65-year-old stone church began to strain at the seams from the influx of new members and activities, it became apparent that something had to be done about the plant. A congregational meeting was called, and the situation put before the members. A report from state officials was read, indicating that within 25 years the site might be condemned and taken over for public offices. The membership pondered this warning, but decided that the present opportunity was so great that even if it was for only twenty years the plant must be brought up to date.

In the fall of 1946 a building program was launched. Two years later, pledges and cash totaling around \$120,000 were on hand, and operations began. The large room under the sanctuary was completely renovated for Sunday school use in 1948. By the next April, the old Sunday school auditorium, which had been an Akron-type struc-

ture, with surrounding balcony in which classes completed in confusion, was remodeled into a two-story building occupied by separate departmental assembly and class rooms. With the remodeled basement, the church now had a three-story educational plant.

Another congregational meeting was called. Should work stop at this point, when it could be paid for from cash and pledges on hand? Or should the congregation resort to a mortgage so it could add a new wing for offices, chapel, library and second-floor recreation room? There was spirited debate. Someone suggested that giving for benevolences be cut to care for part of the cost. That was quickly voted down. Then an elderly descendant of one of the church's honored missionary families found courage to speak. "This church has never been satisfied to sit still or go backward," she said. "Why does anybody think it ought to now?" The ambitious program was voted therewith. Today, with the \$230,000 rebuilding program completed, the mortgage remaining is being paid off at the rate of around \$15,000 annually.

'Before and After'

To a visitor, the thought occurs that the First Church plant might well stand as an inspiring example of "before and after" in church renovation and decoration. Looking in on the Sunday school rooms, each with its own color scheme for tiled floors, walls and draperies, one cannot help recalling the drab classrooms of even many new and expensive churches. First Church had no architectural beauties to work with when it set out on its renovation program, so it decided to concentrate on color and décor, employing the services of a professional decorator. It was quite a step, and many were skeptical. But when they tour the education plant today, each room as bright as a blossoming spring garden, they question no longer.

The men of the congregation devoted hundreds of evening hours to helping renovate the old furnishings so they would not clash with such new equipment as was bought. Dark-stained tables and chairs were scraped down to the grain, waxed and polished.

Few churches built during the architecturally lamentable period of the eighties have as beautiful a sanctuary as has First Church, Topeka, today. About twenty years ago the Akron-type auditorium was separated from the Sunday school area and the carved wood altar, with pulpit at the side, placed against the dividing wall. What most impresses a visitor entering the sanctuary for the first time is the breath-taking beauty of the luminous stained glass windows which grace it. Presented in 1911 by a First Church family, the windows were executed under the supervision of Louis C. Tiffany, who before his death some years later destroyed the molds and formula.

"I realize that many people come here first to see the windows," says Dr. Choguill. "Of course, nobody was ever saved just by looking at a window, but I know that this beauty does play a part in building a real spirit of worship."

The Sunday morning worship services at First Church open with a processional participated in by three robed choirs—the chancel choir (adults), directed by the city's public school music director; the chapel choir, composed of young people of high school age; and the junior choir,

whose members range in age from seven to fourteen. Dr. Choguill tells of the amazement of Bela Vasady, the Hungarian churchman, as he arrived at the church for a scheduled sermon just in time to fall in at the rear of the procession. As they paused at the back of the sanctuary while two small members of the junior choir mounted the altar steps to light the candles, he whispered anxiously, "I'm afraid there has been a mistake. I was supposed to be in a Presbyterian church."

The musical portion of the service is extensive and beautifully performed. The chapel and junior choirs are seated in the rear gallery; they carry part of the service themselves, and sometimes join with the chancel choir in the main anthems.

Sermons That Help

Dr. Choguill's sermons are Bible-centered. After painting his biblical setting in vivid terms, he proceeds in quiet but emphatic manner to bring his text to bear on his listeners' daily experiences. "I think the chief function of the church is to relate people to Christ, so he will make a difference in their lives," he says. First Church congregations hear no arguments on current social problems or world affairs. But members of the church declare that most of the people who have joined since Dr. Choguill came to the pulpit were first attracted because they found in his sermons practical assistance in solving the personal problems they faced in everyday life. A skilled psychiatrist who listens regularly to the First Church sermons pronounces them psychologically sound, filled with the "sort of help people need today."

"I couldn't do without those sermons," says the guidance director of the Topeka high school, a young man with a Ph. D. in education. "I am constantly being surprised at how I go back to them during the week to help me make up my mind what to do in situations I am called on to work out. I look forward to the Sunday morning sermon, and by Friday I am eagerly waiting for the next Sunday to come so I can stock up again." A young packinghouse office manager explains that he is willing to make any sacrifice to be on hand in the First Church sanctuary on Sunday mornings. "If someone had told me five years ago that I'd be breaking my neck to be on hand to hear a regular Sunday sermon each week, I'd have said he was crazy. But that's just what I do."

Training in Music—and Living

The devotion and accomplishments of First Church's youth choirs are testimony to what happens when a church provides opportunity for broad lay participation. They are the result of the dedicated labors of a former teacher of public school music, now the wife of a Topeka lawyer. It was seventeen years ago that Mrs. Floyd Strong launched the program of choral training that has since become famous far beyond First Church. Any children in the city may apply for membership in the junior choir—provided they can sing and are willing to undergo the discipline required. They receive excellent training in choral work and take part in a social program in which their parents also share. But if they shirk their duties, if they are absent from practice or worship services without good cause, if they fail to live up to the code of personal behavior the choir

has set for itself—out they go. Rewards for persistence are pride in being part of a music group with uniquely high standards, ability to meet social situations with poise, and knowledge that no matter what personal troubles they meet they have in their director a friend who will not spare herself until the trouble has been set right.

On reaching the age of fourteen, junior choir members may join the chapel choir. Each year, members of the two youth choirs are to be found in the confirmation class which Dr. Choguill conducts during Lent in preparation for church membership. Often, too, "choir parents" who have not previously been church members come into the First Church family because of what they have learned to know of it through their children's participation.

For six months of each year, First Church's Sunday morning service is broadcast over a local radio station, taking its turn with another Topeka church. Dr. Choguill's earnest, unspectacular sermons have won the church many listening friends. When members admit a troubled conscience, as they frequently do, because they are so patently a white-collar congregation, someone is sure to tell the story of the silver coins which came every week in an envelope addressed to the minister, but with no sender's name. It was discovered at length that they came from a listener who had chanced onto one of Dr. Choguill's sermons when she turned on a radio in the office where she worked as a scrubwoman on Sunday mornings. Today she is a member of First Church.

A Widening Ministry

Because of its downtown location, First Church is constantly being called on to extend its ministry to many who are not its members. It meets the demand gladly. About half the weddings which take place in its sanctuary, with receptions in the beautifully appointed parlor, are of young people who are not members of the church. Many of them, it should be added, become members later.

Each week the office receives at least a half-dozen calls for help from people who are in trouble and know nothing about First Church except that they are likely to find help there. "I suspect that some of them are simply panhandlers," says Dr. Choguill. "But I'd rather have myself proved a sucker than fail where I might be of help." A local lawyer, himself not a member of First Church, makes a practice of referring deserving people in distress to Dr. Choguill, sure that they will receive a sympathetic hearing.

The congregation approves of this outside ministry by its pastor. Last year, when for a second time he turned down a proffered increase in salary, the session put aside \$1,000 in a special fund for him to use in answering these calls for help, which come from people of all races, faiths and stations in life.

Talking to this quiet-voiced minister, an outsider never gets the slightest hint that the pastor himself has had anything to do with making First Church what it is today. But one cannot speak to a single member of the congregation without hearing as the first explanation of this transformation which has come to a withering city congregation: "Of course, the main factor is Orlo Choguill."

Members of First Church are eager to put into words what they feel about their pastor. "He's the only man I ever knew who represents exactly what a true Christian

A should be." "He lives everything he preaches." "To understand what it is that makes us so devoted to him, you'd have to be ill and discouraged, as I was, and have him visit you and make everything seem different." "He's one man who would refuse to walk ten steps with the devil, even if doing so would gain something which in the long run would be to the good of the church." "Knowing him, you understand how it is that the end can never justify the means."

Member after member tells how this refusal of the minister to take the easy way out or the temporarily advantageous course has made a difference in the ideas of the whole church on right and wrong. "He doesn't shout or insist that we do as he says," an elder explains. "He just says what he knows is the right thing to do, and sits there smiling sweetly while we argue that the other way might have its advantages. Before it's over, we see that wrong is wrong. Funny thing, too, but he somehow makes it seem as if we wanted to do what was right all along."

Another tells of the time the chapel choir director arranged for a Negro girl to sing in a special concert, and invited her parents to be present. An irate church member called up Dr. Choguill and asked what he proposed to do about it. "Why should I do anything?" he countered. "Because you know we have never had Negroes in First Church. If we allow a thing like this, before you know it, they'll be here on Sundays. Won't you tell the director to call off her plans?" "No, I won't." "Not even if I withdraw from membership?" "Not even if everyone in the church withdraws," the minister replied.

Even Among Lions

One encounters the same reaction to Dr. Choguill's qualities in conversations with Topekans outside his church. An editor of one of the two leading daily newspapers puts it this way: "If more people who call themselves Christians were like that man, there'd be mighty few people outside the church."

During his former Kansas pastorates, at Ellsworth and Emporia, Dr. Choguill had been an active member of the local Lions clubs. When he came to Topeka, his friends warned him against continuing his affiliation. "These Topeka Lions have no use for preachers," they said. "Perhaps they need a preacher," he replied, and went ahead. Today, the Lions club president told *The Christian Century*, the members of the organization have a new and hearty respect for the Christian ministry as the result of Dr. Choguill's presence among them. "They know he won't go along with all they do, and they admire him for his stand," he said. "Four years ago, if someone had suggested opening a meeting with prayer, he'd have been laughed down. Now every meeting begins with an invocation, and it has come to mean something to the men. The first Christmas, someone suggested we ask Dr. Choguill to tell the Christmas story at a meeting. There was some grumbling, but the idea carried. Now there's a unanimous demand every year that he repeat it."

First Church's pastor is Kansas born and bred. His parents were Congregationalists, one grandmother a Quaker. But when he left the farm for high school, he joined a Presbyterian church, went on to that denomination's College of Emporia and to its McCormick Seminary.

Apparent on the First Church scene today is a selflessness as refreshing as it is indefinable. For instance, there was the \$60,000 legacy which came just as plans for the building program were being discussed. It could have been applied to the fund, so that no mortgage would have been needed. Instead, the officers voted to use only half of it, and to give a third of the remainder to missions, a third to the denomination's general education program, and a third to Westminster Presbyterian Church, which was just then threatened with extinction because of a heavy debt. The \$10,000 proved to be just the spur Westminster needed to "get out from under." When that church, on its feet again, offered to repay the money, First Church said No. "Give an equal amount to the synod fund to aid struggling churches," it suggested.

Selflessness Contagious

Another legacy came when renovation was under way. Instead of using it to ease its own financial burden, First Church gave it to the Presbyterian mission enterprise to build a chapel in the Philippines. When the Third Christian Church in north Topeka lost its building by fire last year, First Church invited its congregation to worship in Redden Chapel on Sunday mornings, and it is still doing so.

The same spirit is shown in the gift of the beautiful altar appointments on condition that the donor remain anonymous. It reveals itself in the difficulty an interviewer has trying to pry out of committee chairmen what part they play in the work of the church; they are concerned only to tell you what others contribute, or how they feel about their pastor. The woman director of a large mercantile establishment on Main street, who headed the important committee on decoration for the building project, will talk only of how enthusiastically the various women's groups worked. It is only from others that one learns of the long hours she took off from her busy schedule to see that everything went as it should.

A contagious spirit of good will is at work, the observer realizes, in the complete absence of friction in the various intrachurch groups, and the lack of criticism by members of each other or of other churches in the city. It comes out again when a young member of the session explains how, on days when they know the going has been rough for their pastor, one or another of the group makes it a point to drop around after work and chat with him in his office before going home.

The Pastor Is Available

Dr. Choguill sets aside the two hours just before dinner to receive in his office anyone who may want a personal consultation. This service he considers one of the most important he has to offer. The office force reports that someone always stops in. The two hours follow a morning of appointments and an afternoon of pastoral calls. The minister's evenings are no less occupied; if he has one evening at home a month, he is doing well. Just now the session is working on plans to provide an assistant who can ease his heavy schedule.

But perhaps the finest testimony to the spirit of selflessness which so pervades First Church is this, from a member of another Topeka congregation: "Somehow, at First Presbyterian there's none of that 'You poor thing, let us

help you out' way of doing things. You feel that those people do what they do because they *want* to, not because they *ought* to."

It is this spirit which gives promise that First Church's future may be even more to the glory of God than its honored past or its action-fraught present. It needs to be. For Topeka today is a city in which the churches as organizations make little impact on the civic picture.

Topeka Betrays a Tradition

A quick look at only one aspect of that picture serves to illustrate this lack. In this city, close to the heart of "Bleeding Kansas," settled by people who were willing to risk their lives to keep men from being exploited as slaves, the 5,000 Negro residents cannot buy a meal in a downtown restaurant. They are equally unwelcome in the "leading" churches. In only a few plants may they earn a living as industrial workers; for the most part they are restricted to the service trades or the professions.

In the summer of 1949 two Negroes with startling fortitude (for Topeka) decided to test a Kansas law which states that all public places licensed by municipalities must admit anyone who pays the necessary fee. The Topeka theaters were so licensed. The city council heard the Negroes' plea and promptly fined the theaters which had refused them admission. Then it announced an open hearing on a proposal to rescind the licensing of theaters, in order to free them to exclude anyone they pleased.

The local council of churches passed a resolution opposing the proposal. A few clergymen attended the hearing, and two of them courageously spoke out against the move. No one spoke in favor of the proposal, but the city council went ahead anyway and adopted it. Neither the churches nor any other group came out subsequently against this obviously arbitrary disregard by public officials of the expressed opinion of civic leaders or what had been done to deprive a minority of citizens of their rights.

Some time ago Topeka's Protestants set in motion a plan to invite the Federal Council of Churches' executive committee to come to the city for a meeting. Local leaders obtained assurances from the two leading hotels that they would welcome Negro members of the committee on an unsegregated basis. But civic organizations heard of the plan, and spoke out against it. Topeka is hard at work attracting new industries, and nothing must be permitted to upset the applecart. The invitation was not extended. The churches too seem disinclined to upset any applecart.

If the Protestant churches are to make the influence of

what they believe felt in America's cultural pattern, it is in cities like Topeka that they must start. For around one-third of the population of this typical midwestern state capital (and this does not include children under confirmation age) are members of Protestant churches. Topeka's people are considerably better educated, and on the average far more favored economically, than is the case in larger and smaller American communities. The Protestant churches are strong and prosperous. The more prominent of their pulpits are occupied today by younger ministers who command respect within and without their own doors. They are known as men who stand for the application of Christian principles to everyday life. But when it comes to insisting on that application in local situations, the churches as such are reluctant to step out and lead the way.

When the day does come that they seek to extend the application of what being Christian means to the community situation about them, however, the Topeka churches will find a rich fund of resources at hand for the endeavor. They will find it in many of their own members who have already caught a vision of what Christianity should imply all the way down the line and who are restless in conscience as they realize how far removed many of their practices are from their professions. They will find it in their pulpits. (Even now a visitor to Topeka hears only praise for the courageous clergymen who spoke out at the theater-licensing hearing.) They will find it, unexpectedly perhaps, in the awakening realization on the part of certain prominent professional men that the city's treatment of her Negro citizens is, in the words of a lawyer who ruefully admits that so far he has gone along with clients demanding that segregation be maintained, "unchristian, abominable and a cause for penitence."

Promise for the Future

When that day comes, these churches will find a new moral resource, above all, in the traditions of which they are so justly proud. The First Presbyterian Church, in particular, will find it in the record of courage left by such men as staunch John A. Steele, its first regular minister, who forsook a promising pastorate in his native Virginia as a protest against slavery and in the 1850's journeyed to "Bleeding Kansas" to shepherd the struggling little flock of Topeka Presbyterians, fewer than thirty in number, who shared his views and were ready even to die for them.

First Presbyterian Church of Topeka has had a past of which to be proud. It has a challenging present. It may have an even greater future.

XI. Collegiate Methodist Church Ames, Iowa

IF YOU HAD happened to pass down the main street of Ames, Iowa, on the first Sunday morning of October 1950, you would have seen a great many people standing on the steps and the broad walk in front of the Collegiate Methodist Church. The gothic building was already full of worshipers attending an early service. This new throng was waiting to enter and take their places. Soon they formed a line two, three and four persons wide. The line quickly grew from the door to the street, down the street past a little restaurant, past a filling station, across a side street and well on into the second block. In fact on this morning the line was shorter than on most Sundays, for hundreds of students from the Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, which is just across the street, were out of town at a football game.

Some interesting stories are told concerning this weekly spectacle in Ames. One Sunday morning an Iowa State College alumnus drove past. Seeing the crowd, he asked what the excitement was about. He was told that the destination of the queue was not a movie or an athletic contest, but the Methodist church. He was so impressed that he went in and got acquainted. After he had stayed through both services, heard sermons as moving as any he had ever listened to, learned what the church is doing, he sent the pastor a check for \$1,000 to swell its building fund. Since that visit he has written two more checks of equal size and has gone everywhere singing the praises of this church.

A College Community

What would cause a man to do a thing like that? This is not an ordinary congregation. The main concern of the Collegiate Church is to serve its large share of the 10,000 students and 1,000 members of the faculty and staff of the Iowa State College. Year after year about one-fourth of the students write "Methodist" on the card which the college gives them for indicating their religious preference. Such is the popularity of the church that not all these come from Methodist families, but a large proportion do. The churches of this denomination in Iowa are said to have 270,000 members. Many of these live on farms or in villages. Since some children still follow the ways of their fathers, many of the young of Iowa Methodist families come to State College for their education and attend their denomination's leading student church for their soul's good.

They don't choose this church because it is a plush paradise or a religious

country club. As churches go nowadays, Collegiate is on the Spartan side, and Iowa Methodists seem disposed to keep it there. Of the 12 colleges in the commonwealth, exclusive of state schools, this one denomination supports 4. All were founded in the days when every county seat in the newly opened west aspired to become at the same time a center of learning and a profitable real-estate development. Iowa Methodist colleges are Morningside at Sioux City, which now has about 1,100 students; Cornell at Mount Vernon, which attracts 850; Iowa Wesleyan at Mount Pleasant, which draws 500; and Simpson at Indianola, which enrolls 600. In addition the denomination helps support, through Wesley Foundation programs for students, churches at Ames, at Iowa City, where the state university enrolls another 10,000, and at Cedar Falls, where the state teachers' college enrolls 2,500. As if seven ventures into higher education were not enough, some Methodists think the church should set up a Wesley Foundation for its share of the 4,500 students who attend Drake University in Des Moines, a Disciples of Christ school.

Why This Church Succeeds

With such competition within its own denomination, the Collegiate Church at Ames does not receive the outside assistance it deserves and could profitably use. About one-third of its annual budget comes from outside Ames. If its ministry had not been extraordinarily effective, the church would have gone out of existence long ago. Indeed it barely escaped extinction during the thirties—but that is getting ahead of our story. Here it is sufficient to note what this church has that makes it grow in spite of obstacles. This may be summarized in nine points. They show why this student church, the only one of its kind to be named, is entitled to the place among the great churches of America which it was accorded by The Christian Century's poll of 100,000 Protestant ministers.

1. Collegiate Methodist Church at Ames is rendering an outstanding Christian ministry to approximately one-fourth of the students and faculty of a major agricultural and technological college, relying principally on the power of great preaching.

2. It is respected because it practices as well as extols religious liberty and, in spite of differences with university policy at certain points, it contributes to the excellent relations of mutual respect and aid which are traditional between town and gown at Ames, to the equal credit of both.

3. Collegiate Church continuously and systematically works at the task of evangelism, interpreting that mission as not only personal but social as well, and making good use of adversity to advance its cause.

4. It majors on ministry to the young but does not neglect families of faculty people and other permanent residents, and it does so without reducing its presentation of the gospel to an adolescent level or permitting it to soar into the stratosphere of sterile intellectualism.

5. It is doing more to recruit and help train an effective Christian leadership than many a church college.

6. It contributes to the development of an ecumenical Christian fellowship on the campus, in the community and in the wider outreach of the church.

7. It goes a long way to supply students of a technological school with the deep cultural and religious orientation which preoccupation with humanities should but seldom does offer in liberal arts colleges.

8. It conserves and extends the Christian faith of rural Iowa and helps make it at home in the modern world without diminishing its vitality.

9. It dignifies and elevates the highly specialized vocations at which an increasingly large segment of our people work and invests them with the sanctions of Christian ministry.

These are large assertions. They are not claims the Collegiate Church makes for itself, for it would describe its role in more modest terms. But they are claims The Christian Century makes for Collegiate Church and for its minister, Dr. G. S. Nichols, for his associates and for his hundreds of helpers. They are made after a Century editor visited Ames and talked with scores of people in many walks of life. He held many conferences with members of the church staff, with students and professors in State College, with businessmen in the town and farmers in the country. He worshiped at Collegiate Church with great congregations and small groups, saw the church at work through most of a normal week after the opening of the fall term of college, talked with ministers and religious leaders of other churches and groups. What follows is some of the evidence on which these conclusions are based.

I

Ames Collegiate Church has developed a remarkably successful ministry in a constituency including many students by maintaining a consistent Christian concern for persons. This first impression is sound, but to be properly understood it requires a little knowledge of recent history. Fifteen years ago, few would have prophesied that this church would be outstanding today. It was worse than bankrupt. It had a \$140,000 debt, congregations of less than 100, and an overpowering sense of frustration. It was trying to operate on a budget of \$4,500 a year, of which \$35 went to missions and benevolences. In winter the dwindling remnant of the faithful sat shivering in their overcoats in a largely empty sanctuary. The furnace was out of order and the coal bill had not been fully paid since the beginning of the depression. Newcomers who might have been hardy enough to brave the refrigerated atmosphere of the church avoided it for fear of being saddled with a share of what seemed an unpayable debt.

Then G. S. Nichols became pastor, accepting the assign-

ment after two other men had turned it down as impossible. Today most of the 1,500 to 2,000 who worship in Collegiate Church on Sunday remember the dark days of 1935, if they know about them at all, only as background for the luminous present. The debt was paid long ago, much of the money being contributed by Iowa Methodists outside of Ames. In addition, the church has raised and spent \$135,000 for an educational and student activities plant, and it has \$40,000 in sight on the \$200,000 needed for its completion. The latest yearbook of the Iowa-Des Moines conference estimates the present value of the property held by the congregation as \$412,500. Out of an annual operating budget of \$40,000, students last year contributed over \$12,500—a larger sum than is given by any other student group in a Methodist church anywhere. Students also contribute handsomely to the building fund.

How did this happen? Five years after Dr. Nichols became pastor of Collegiate Church a great change was already taking place. Mrs. Hope M. Spence, of *One Foot in Heaven* fame, was in Ames in 1940. She wrote to a friend a letter which was not intended for publication but did get into a Mason City church paper, to her delight. She said:

I wish you could come to see me some Sunday. Your heart would be thrilled to see these students go to church. The church I attend is the Wesley Foundation church on the campus. Even with heartbreakingly and most unwisely inadequate facilities and support, my pastor, Dr. Nichols, does an amazing work with the thousands of Methodist young people here. There is a greater number of Methodist students than of any other denomination and every Sunday the church is crowded with them. The college organist and the college chorus director lead a choir of student voices, so the music is superb.

And Dr. Nichols is a wonderful preacher. His youthful congregation listen to him with absorbed and silent attention. If ever one becomes impatient or unsympathetic with the Wesley Foundation assessments, do try to get him down here for a Sunday. He'll be surprised!

Now, ten years later, a similar letter could be written. A student whom The Christian Century asked concerning the secret of the church's influence pointed across the room to where Dr. Nichols was talking with some young married people. He said: "There is the answer to your question. Dr. Nichols is the secret of this church's greatness." We looked across the room at Dr. Nichols' tall form. His thinning hair is white but 56 years have not stooped his shoulders or dimmed his smile. He still has about him a good deal of the unassuming friendliness of his Missouri background. He grew up on a small farm near Columbia in a family which held membership in a Holiness church. Before the First World War he was a country school teacher for three years, and had not finished high school when he quit and entered the U.S. navy, where he became a pharmacist's mate. While at Quantico, Virginia, he joined the Methodist Church.

After the war, he entered Morningside College and was graduated in 1923. He then studied for a year at Princeton and shifted to Drew Theological Seminary, where he got his bachelor of divinity degree in 1925. "Reverend Nick," as he is universally known in Ames, then went to the University of Missouri, where he studied under the great Charles Elwood and took a master's degree in sociology. "It came to me one day," he said, "that being a Christian

Collegiate Methodist Church, Ames, Iowa, was chosen in The Christian Century's poll of 100,000 ministers as the church in a medium-sized city in the northwest part of the nation most worthy of study. Included in the balloting in this category were churches in Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. Runners-up to the Ames church in the voting were St. Paul Methodist, Lincoln, Nebraska; First Methodist, Colorado Springs, Colorado; St. Paul's Methodist, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and First Lutheran, Albert Lea, Minnesota.

meant following Christ in all these relations." He meant the relations which were opened to him by his study of sociology—war, politics, business and race. The last was particularly difficult because his old border-state prejudices against Negroes were deeply rooted. "In the church where I grew up," he recalls, "we couldn't smoke, dance or wear a tie, but we could help with a lynching. That was all right."

Dr. Nichols' first pastorates were in Sydney and Audubon, Iowa. He came to Ames sixteen years ago. For four years the church could not provide him with a secretary. But he raised the money and got one anyway. One of his first moves, after getting the furnace to work, was to try to interest Negro college students in joining the Collegiate Church. Ever since that time there have been Negroes singing in the choir, serving as ushers and otherwise prominently identified with the congregation. At a sorority function a white girl once told Reverend Nick that she had been so overwhelmed by "the living of Christianity" that when a Negro showed her to a seat she wept as she sat down. Racial distinctions have no place in this church. The Negroes or the 156 foreign students who attended Ames last year are as welcome as anybody. Students of the Wesley Foundation cooperated with others to get the college rules changed so that Negro students could stay at college dormitories and Negro girls could live in the practical home-management houses where all white home economics students receive their training.

This attitude, in which the churches of Ames take a leading part, is shared by many people on the faculty. Joseph Gittler, famous sociology professor on the Iowa State faculty and a member of the American commission of UNESCO, is one of the regular speakers in the Wesley Foundation's Sunday evening series. The Wesley Foundation is sponsoring a D.P., who lives in one of the fraternity houses at Ames. During the depression Reverend Nick sponsored a student cooperative. It began in the parsonage basement, where one student wanted to cook his meals to save money. The one student snowballed up to 13. Soon others wanted to join, so the minister helped the students rent a basement in another house and 30 students came in. Then a second club was started and a whole house was rented. The club quickly became international. Negroes, Chinese and Jews were among those who lived together. At first there was some opposition, but the official board stood behind Reverend Nick and finally the people came around. Eventually many of them were proud that the church had some part in this. These eating clubs were disbanded during the war and have not been revived.

Reverend Nick's greatest strength lies in the winsomeness of his preaching. His personal relations are consistent with a deeply committed life and underscore the sincerity of his manner. But his impact on successive student generations at Iowa State College attains its greatest force when he stands, a tall figure in black gown, in the pulpit of Collegiate Church. Then he becomes a *prairie Savonarola* preaching with power the unsearchable riches of Christ. His resonant voice is edged with emotion. His eyes never release the congregation for a single instant. He delivers his sermon, planting it squarely in the soul of each hearer.

After listening to him, one is not surprised to learn that Dr. Nichols writes out his sermons with the greatest care,

spending hours on them every week. He memorizes every phrase and preaches the sermon over to himself before he delivers it from the pulpit. But when he preaches, it is from his heart to the hearts of the listeners. "The unpardonable sin of the pulpit is dullness," he wrote in the March 1950 issue of the *Garrett Tower* (a publication of the Garrett Biblical Institute, Evanston, Illinois).

II

A second element in the strength of the Collegiate Church is its maintenance of a free pulpit. By its sturdy insistence on the practice of religious liberty it is serving the highest traditions of American Protestantism. Its officers know that Dr. Nichols is a pacifist. They also know that not a great many of his church members follow him in this view. But his official board and a large majority of his parishioners insist that he shall be free to state his conviction. He takes them at their word.

Early in the Second World War he preached a sermon boldly entitled, "I Am Still a Pacifist." He had 2,000 copies printed and kept them in the church foyer for distribution. During the war he also displayed and distributed 10,000 copies of a sermon he had preached some time before, giving reasons for opposing our entry into the conflict. Since hundreds of Navy V12 sailors were being trained at the college and about 200 of them sat in front of him every Sunday, the minister's stand aroused opposition. A few people left his church after staging a determined but unsuccessful effort to have the church repudiate him. There was a conscientious objectors' camp near by and a number of its inmates sang in the choir. Several boys from the church went to prison for their stand against war, and perhaps a score of others were in Civilian Public Service camps. Reverend Nick mixed conscientious objectors and conscientious fighters, took the navy boys to visit the C.P.S. camp and the C.P.S. men to visit the navy. There was no conflict between these conscientious young men, but older people complained. The minister stood his ground. When a church member protested against having C.P.S. boys in the choir, Reverend Nick replied: "What's the difference between a conscientious objector in the choir and a conscientious objector in the pulpit?"

Matters came to a head when the American Legion sought to get signatures to petitions for the passage of a universal military training law and a campus group was formed to oppose conscription. The Memorial Union, a meeting place for all kinds of college organizations, was closed to the group opposing conscription, so the Collegiate Methodist pastor invited them to foregather in the church. When Kirby Page found college meeting places closed to him, he also was welcomed at the church. Then 50 Legionnaires came to the church to heckle an anti-conscription meeting. Reverend Nick sturdily insisted that the anticonscription forces must be permitted to organize and that there be a free debate on the merits of the issue. They were organized, and the Legionnaires heckled the speakers, but did not break up the meeting, as some had threatened to do.

Today in the college faculty there is still the same firm resistance to Reverend Nick's ideas, but nobody any longer questions his right to hold and express them. Members of

the faculty are also members of the church board and take pride in the fact that Collegiate Methodist stands for a free pulpit and religious liberty. Of these precious things Reverend Nick has become something of a symbol. At the same time, his modest bearing and his complete willingness to accord to the other man the freedom he claims for himself strengthens the fine relations of mutual aid and respect that have long prevailed between Iowa State College and the community of Ames. The Christian Century knows of no situation where there is a church college in which relations between community and college are more generous, sympathetic and wholesome than they are at Ames, whose college is state-supported, not church-supported.

III

A third factor in the success of Collegiate Church is its program of personal and social evangelism. Without it the church could not continuously renew its life, as it does in a situation where there is inevitably a high turnover in constituency. Iowa State operates on the quarter system. And so Collegiate Methodist has a new evangelistic effort every three months. Mary Baird, who appears on the church bulletin as a parish visitor, is the church's active secretary of evangelism. She is eminently fitted for a task in which she deeply believes. A former missionary of the United Presbyterian Church in Egypt and later a high school teacher and college dean, Miss Baird lives with her sister, a teacher in the Ames public schools.

In every home she finds "people hungry for the love and fellowship of the church." She is a constant visitor at Pammel Court, a trailer camp where young married couples who attend State College live. To her they are "wonderfully kind and responsive." She often discovers that young husbands and wives are divided in their church loyalties, but gets them to join some church together—Collegiate Methodist, if they choose, but if not, another church in Ames. Miss Baird has a membership chairman in each of the women's circles of the church. "Methodists are organized to the hilt, so it is easy to find a job for everybody, no matter how many you take in," she says. For each new member she gets an older member to act as sponsor and counselor until the newcomer is at home and active in the church.

New members, says Dr. Nichols, are requested to attend a membership class for six sessions, "even if they have been Methodists for forty years." This fall a class of about 100 prospective members began the study of what it means to be a good Christian and a useful member of the Methodist Church.

The membership committee sends people out two by two to call on prospective members. Twenty teams went out the week The Christian Century was studying the Collegiate Church. Each pair of visitors was given the addresses of five persons, each of whom had received a letter saying that the team was coming. The church brings in an average of 150 new full members a year, and 100 to 125 affiliate or student members. Last year 41 infants and 26 adults were baptized, and 27 adults were received on confession of faith and 91 by transfer of membership. Thus evangelism is a staff operation carried on continuously,

involving a good many members of the church and headed by a lay committee.

The student members also go out by twos to visit prospective members in the campus community. They have their own organization, headed by a student council of 21, and it carries on a program as large and intensive as that of the rest of the church. This year the Wesley Foundation had enrolled 52 students in church membership classes by October 24, secured pledges of \$10,000 for support and enlisted 71 students in its program. An average of 185 students are present at the church on Sunday evenings. And almost every night of the year committees and groups meet in every nook and corner of the church.

Evangelism here is social as well as personal. Every week 25 or 30 students come together at the church for what is called a "meager meal." They eat scraps or leftovers, the money thus saved going to the World Student Christian relief fund. If the Sunday evening students' club has had such good appetite that nothing is left, the group collects day-old bakery bread, stale rolls and other cheap food. The American Friends Service Committee is the prime mover in this "meager meal" project, but people in the church participate in it and many think it is a church enterprise. Once it was led by "big shot" campus personalities and attracted large numbers. Now it is supported by the devoted work of steady, week-by-week pluggers, who in a year manage to collect a considerable sum.

But here again our account is incomplete without reference to Reverend Nick and the impact of his Sunday morning sermons. The Christian Century asked a number of students what the Collegiate Church means to them. A typical reply was: "The messages of Reverend Nick have challenged me to find a worthwhile way of life. He talks on a level with the majority of his congregation, who are college students. The atmosphere of the church has moved many a student from religious apathy to a vital and functioning life. Wherever I may go in life, I will always look upon this church as the high point in my college career." Another wrote: "One year here in the work of Collegiate Methodist has given me a faith and knowledge leading me into the world as a Christian to profess what I believe and to help others to find their Savior too."

In all this vigorous outreach, Collegiate Methodist Church is an example of the truth of Shakespeare's "Sweet are the uses of adversity." Because it is confronted by an enormous opportunity and because it lacks financial resources, Collegiate Methodist has been compelled to include a considerable part of the state of Iowa in its parish. Its ministers reach out to a great many of the Methodist churches of Iowa. Student deputation teams make dozens of visits to churches in a year. Student members of the Collegiate Church, on their return home, tell its story. This long sustained and persistent effort has had the effect of making the church very widely and favorably known. This would not have been possible if the program which is carried on at Ames were not so significant in itself. But because it is, the efforts of the church to find support are accounted to it for righteousness.

Supplementing these efforts is a continuous mail circularization of the churches telling about the work of

Collegiate Methodist. Letters invite the churches to call on this church for any services it can render. The Wesley Foundation's Chevrolet probably pays for itself several times over every year because it increases the mobility of the active young people of Collegiate Methodist. With the current shortage of ministers, the Wesley Foundation at the church is taking full responsibility for one church which does not have a pastor and is helping others.

Lack of financial resources also compels the leadership of the church to make sure that every last person who can cooperate is doing it. So in a church with about 300 families, about 300 families contribute to the budget, and this fall 255 students answered the first call that they also contribute. Both the church members and the student groups organize teams to canvass for financial cooperation as well as for membership. It is an interesting fact that the largest single weekly contribution to the church budget is made by a student who lives in a very unprepossessing abode in the near-by trailer camp. This student, like many others in the church, is a tither. The church so thoroughly extends itself that there is no room in its membership for free-riders. And its program is so worth while that few try to escape their financial responsibility.

IV

Collegiate Methodist's fourth claim to distinction will have to be set down largely as an aspiration based on a partial achievement, rather than as an accomplished fact. The religious education program of this church suffers most severely because of the lack of adequate facilities. For 25 years the church has had a spacious and beautiful sanctuary. But it had to depend for space for its Sunday school upon the large open basement of that structure. Recently it completed the first part of the student center, which provides accommodations for a few more large classes. But most classes are still held in the midst of a great hubbub. They are surrounded by portable screens, through which sound passes readily. It is a tribute to the determination of the church to give its young some kind of religious education that through the year it has an average attendance of about 200 in the Sunday school, to which should be added around 50 officers and teachers. This is about one-fourth of all who are enrolled.

However, the church is seriously trying to improve its program. To that end, it recently engaged Louis W. Hilbert, Jr., as director of music and Christian education. Mr. Hilbert was trained as a public school teacher and is an accomplished musician. He has degrees in both fields. He spent over four years in Civilian Public Service during World War II, following which he did Methodist student work and engaged in further study at Pacific School of Religion. He says: "I am convinced that the church needs more full-time laymen in its service. I am remaining a layman and bearing a layman's witness here in education and music. The field of student work fascinates me particularly. I believe firmly in the ecumenical movement as being the present expression of the ultimate goal of Jesus Christ throughout the world, and I seem to sense that the growth of the church along ecumenical lines is to be found in the student field in almost every denomination."

The Sunday evening program of the Wesley Founda-

tion supplements the other work of the church in the field of religious education. Betty Jean Clark is director of student work. She is a minister's daughter and a product of Wesley Foundation work. Every student with whom The Christian Century talked at Ames expressed affection for Mrs. Clark and admiration for this aspect of the life of the church. One student said: "I feel that I could go to the church for counsel and guidance in any problem that I may have. Collegiate Methodist has given me a faith that no other church has. It talks my language and answers my problems in a practical way." Another said: "The Wesley Foundation and the work that it offers in Christian leadership and service has made me a real Christian." The chancel choir of 129 is largely composed of students, who value the excellent training they receive as well as the opportunity of rendering a Christian service.

V

Another important reason why Collegiate Church is deeply rooted in the affections of Iowa Methodists is its part in raising up men and women for full-time Christian service. So far this year it has 22 students who are aiming at some kind of church-related vocation. Ames is recognized as one of the best places for training people for agricultural missions. There are six students in the group this year who are planning to enter the ministry. Others are expected to make their decision during the year, as their predecessors have done every year before them. Iowa State College has had among its presidents two ministers, and its atmosphere is still warmly friendly to the church. The Christian Century talked with one young man and his wife who are thinking of studying to be medical missionaries. The young man is about to graduate from Iowa State College's course of veterinary medicine; his wife teaches languages and music. They have already opened correspondence with a mission board concerning entering a medical school when he has finished at State. Wesley Foundation deputation work often leads to full-time Christian service.

Students who are interested along this line can find courses at Iowa State College which help them in their training. The college has two professors of religious education. Roy LeMoine, an Episcopalian who was formerly a navy chaplain, has the title of "director of religious life and professor of religious education." Students in technical vocational training value these courses because they feel the need to keep their Christian training on a par with what they learn in school. Through Wesley Foundation services and the other services available at the church, plus those available at the college and in the community generally, they have far more opportunity to do this than do students in most schools. Again the fact that the attitude of Iowa State College has traditionally and consistently been favorable to religion plays a very important part. So the growth of Christian leadership in Collegiate Church and at Ames generally is a natural process. President Charles E. Friley of Iowa State College is the son of a Baptist minister. The department heads of the school are all more than nominal Christians and many of them are leaders in their local churches. In the home economics department young women are taught to set up homes

whose spirit is Christian. The training in the field of science at Iowa State is not hostile to Christianity.

Formerly Iowa State College had its own chaplain and religious services. For many years attendance was required. But with the rise of church student foundations in the last generation this has changed. The college still has its courses in religion and philosophy, its baccalaureate sermon, and official prayers on great occasions. But the rise of the church foundations around the campus has caused some shift in emphasis. That this has been done with entire good will on both sides is a great tribute to all concerned. One reason why the transfer has been possible is that the churches in Ames are large, substantial and well staffed. The college has not had to deal with a multitude of small, weak and quarreling groups.

VI

Collegiate Methodist is favorably known outside the denomination because it contributes its important share to the development of an ecumenical Christian fellowship on the campus and in the community. There is a ministerial fellowship in Ames, of which Dr. Nichols is a member. On the college campus there is a student organization known as the Interfaith Council. There is also a campus Christian workers' group, which serves the purpose of a council on religion. Good cooperation marks the relations between Protestants and Catholics here. The number of Jewish students is small. Roman Catholic priests attend the campus Christian workers' association meetings and accept committee responsibility. After the quadrennial conference of the Student Christian Movement, which was held at Lawrence, Kansas, two years ago, an ecumenical conference was held at Ames. Catholic students participated.

Other churches, in addition to the Roman Catholic, which are generally noncooperative, are cooperative at Iowa State College. For example, the local representative of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is an active member of the campus Christian workers' group.

An incomplete count of the religious preference cards signed by students for the first quarter of the 1950-51 school year gave the following figures: Methodist, 1,930; Congregational, 400; Presbyterian, 978; Roman Catholic, 730; Lutheran, 905; Baptist, 325; Disciples of Christ, 310; Episcopalian, 230; Jewish, less than 50. There were several Mormons, Pentecostals and members of other groups.

VII

Still another element in the success of Collegiate Church is the way it is managing to supply students of a technological school with the cultural and religious orientation which is usually held to be the monopoly of the liberal arts college. One student put it this way: "I find the Collegiate Church a place to worship and grow in living while I acquire a technical knowledge of agriculture. It helps me to learn how an experiment or basic scientific fact fits into the history of time and my life. It supplies the key to my effort at harmonizing scientific fact with the social laws

which come down through the ages. Through the church I find fellowship and I find God through worship."

What better testimony could be given to the ministry of religion to science or to the role of the church in leading its members to an integrated and living faith? Of course the church cannot supply all the riches that come from a sustained study of the humanities, but this church at least is truly pointing its members to the attitude of mind without which those riches cannot be found. It supplies, as this student said, the key to an understanding of one's relation to history and of the proper place of science in the total scheme of things. That is no mean service.

VIII

Closely allied to this service is Collegiate Church's way of lifting up into full fellowship of Christian ministry the specialized vocations which constitute the main subject matter at Iowa State College as well as the principal way in which millions in our day serve. The eminent botanist who is head of the committee on pastoral relations and staff personnel and also chief usher in Collegiate Church once considered entering the full-time service of the church. Now he is high in his profession, but he does not try to isolate these professional activities from his religious interests. In the classroom as well as in his church activities he is a minister of the Lord of life. This point of view comes close to the idea of the priesthood or mutual ministry of all believers which dominated the early Christian church and has repeatedly come to the surface during and since the Reformation. It fits very naturally into the work of Collegiate Methodist Church and the atmosphere of Iowa State College.

IX

Enough has been said to make it unnecessary for us to do more than state a final conclusion concerning Collegiate Church. Along with other churches which serve the college community in Ames, it is conserving and extending the Christian faith of rural Iowa. Its leaders know what is going on in the world. They realize that in many places the attitude so commonly found among students in Ames would be regarded as unsophisticated. But they also know enough of the results of what is considered sophistication to value sincerity and wholesomeness and to do their best to conserve these attitudes. Nobody here considers it smart deliberately to wreck a student's faith or to belittle the convictions which have placed the stamp of integrity on the character of American life. On the contrary, in Collegiate Church and in the college every effort is made to take the sterling spiritual capital which they have been given by the Christian homes of Iowa and invest it so that it will bring forth a hundredfold. "A charge to keep I have" might be sung by many faculty members at Ames, as well as by the ministers and members of Collegiate Church. And one has only to share their common aspirations and purposes in a week of the activities of this church to realize how much they mean in the building of a successful church.

XII. First Community Church

Columbus, Ohio

ALL OVER America, men and women of faith are building new temples of eternal hope and loving service. Believing that the spiritual communities which are engaged in this mighty voluntary endeavor are the real sources of any nation's true greatness, The Christian Century set out a year ago to find, study and report on twelve great churches of America. A poll of 100,000 ministers directed our inquiry. When its findings were known to us, an editor of this paper visited each church without prior notice, observing the church in the course of its normal life. Each month throughout 1950 these pages have carried a comprehensive account of one of these churches. The current report concludes the series.

It was our hope that the quest would strengthen the churches studied and inspire others to emulate their example. We sought to open new channels of communication between churchmen of different traditions and to deepen appreciation of common loyalties. We even dared aspire to arouse the nation to the incalculable worth of the ministries which these fellowships of outreaching compassion are sacrificially rendering, often without adequate recognition.

We shall have more to say when the series is concluded concerning the results of this venture of faith. Here it is sufficient to note that these consequences have far outrun our most daring dreams. In all parts of the United States, in cities, towns and open country, and among all sorts and conditions of people, we have found that the Spirit which leads these churches is constraining them to endow men, women and children with the dignity of exemplary character, to bless homes with integrity and Christian devotion, to sweeten community life with civic virtue. Everywhere the press, local and state, has considered that these studies of outstanding churches were good news and has generously reported on their achievements as portrayed in our studies. And even though these reports were essentially local in nature, they have attracted the attention of the national press here and abroad.

In many ways, the most unusual of the twelve great churches is First Community Church in Columbus, Ohio. It received the largest number of votes of any church in a major city in the northeast part of the country. American ministers were asked to nominate for study three churches of different types—open country or village, small city, and large city. When the

votes were in, the ministers' choice of a church of each of the three types was taken for each of the four quarters of the nation. In the northeast quarter of the country, the village church selected was the New Knoxville, Ohio, Evangelical and Reformed. The church in a medium sized city was the Congregational Christian Church in West Hartford, Connecticut. And the church in a large city in the northeast part of the country, where there are so many large cities, was First Community Church in the capital of Ohio.

Alone among the twelve churches, First Community is without denominational affiliation. Thirty years ago it severed its thoroughly friendly relations with the Congregational fellowship and with entire good will on both sides took the name it bears today. When this happened, it was a thriving small church. Now it is a thriving large church. Its congregation of about 4,500 members consists of people whose religious backgrounds include 36 denominations and no previous religious affiliations. It is served by a staff of 27 well trained people, who are not busier than the hundreds of capable volunteers. The activities of the church require a budget of \$120,000 a year, exclusive of the \$500,000 which is being raised for the expansion of its modern plant. Community services rendered by the church are on such a scale that an additional \$110,000 passes through its books annually.

But a large membership and a substantial budget do not by themselves account for the selection of First Community Church as one of the great churches of America. The fact that it has these in spite of its lack of denominational affiliations does not account for its nomination by ministers most of whom serve denominational churches. What is its secret of success? What does it have to teach Christians in other churches concerning America's need for the ministries of religion and a church's ability to meet it?

The Christian Century's study has led to the conclusion that First Community has a great deal to teach. Visits to

the church, interviews with its pastor, staff and members, with citizens of the community and representatives of other churches have revealed that it is doing a remarkable job of pioneering. Several of its methods are unorthodox today, although they may be commonly accepted tomorrow. But even these do not fully explain all that is happening at this church. Something more compelling,

more transforming, is involved. What this vital element is will be suggested during the course of this article.

Suburban Setting

On the surface, First Community's growth and influence might be ascribed to the fact that it "got thar fustest with the mostest," if one may use here the words by which Confederate General Forrest described how he won his victories. "Thar" in this case is a swiftly growing suburban location in Columbus. The capital city of Ohio now has around 350,000 people. It is growing steadily, and a considerable part of the increase has settled in the northwest part of the city where this church started 40 years ago. Legally the church is not in Columbus, but in a separately incorporated village called Marble Cliff, which in turn is part of what is called the "Tri-Village Area," the other two incorporations being Grandview Heights and Upper Arlington. These villages are actually part of Columbus, but this identity is not legally recognized because of the way the city has grown. Like some other midwestern capitals, Columbus grew without much planning, expanding north and south and east and west along main highways for miles and miles. Between the north arm, which reaches ten miles from the center, and the western arm, which extends six miles, fields of corn recently grew. Now the area is sprouting houses as rapidly as it ever grew crops.

At the south side of this area, along the bluffs above the Scioto river, Grandview Heights started a half-century ago. It soon had Presbyterian and Methodist churches. Then Marble Cliff was organized as a more exclusive neighborhood. In 1909 a group of people met under a tree there and decided to hold Sunday school in the Grandview public school. The following year the Sunday school officers asked the great Dr. Washington Gladden, minister of the downtown Congregational Church, how to start a church in this area. He suggested that a community census be taken. It revealed that a majority were Congregationalists, so a Congregational church was organized. A building was completed in December 1911 at a cost of \$8,000. Fred Brownlee, Dr. Gladden's assistant, became minister. He remained four years, later becoming home missions secretary of the Congregational Christian denomination.

It Becomes a Community Church

During the First World War, two other denominations bought lots in the neighborhood with a view to building churches. Oliver C. Weist, who was pastor from 1915 to 1931, and the members of the church again consulted Dr. Gladden to see what could be done to prevent the fragmentation of their community along sectarian lines. He recommended that they reorganize as a community church. They did so in 1919, taking the name First Community Church because one member had been a member of a Second Methodist Church and did not like the implications of the numeral. Sixty-one new people joined the church when the change was made. Temporarily, this headed off the plans of the other denominations and gave the community church a head start.

It grew so fast that the old church building became too small, and early in 1926 the present building was dedicated. It cost \$250,000 and with the old church, which was retained, was planned to be adequate for many years.

Nobody worried very much about its large debt until the 1929 depression struck. Then Marble Cliff became known as "mortgage hill," the biggest encumbrance being on the church. The Roman Catholic Church, which had some members in an Italian settlement in Grandview, hoped, it was reported, to take over the First Community buildings. But the bondholders held on grimly, if not patiently, and when Roy A. Burkhart became the minister in 1935 the tide turned.

Present Ministry Begins

When the Burkhart ministry, now in its sixteenth year, began, First Community Church had 1,410 members and a debt of \$146,000. By 1940, the membership had grown to 2,050 and the debt was shrinking at the rate of \$15,000 a year. Five years later the membership reached 3,274 and on May 15, 1950, it stood at 4,488. Meanwhile the obligations of the church were retired. Now a substantial sum is on hand for the erection of additional educational facilities, construction on which started in November 1950. The old Congregational church building and the main sanctuary are both to be remodeled, and a new educational building will be erected.

There are now eight churches in the Tri-Village Area. For many years the position of First Community Church was protected by a zoning ordinance barring further church building. Roman Catholics got around this by starting a church in a large house which they acquired during the depression. Later a Lutheran congregation successfully sued to break the zoning restriction and is now erecting a building. A Methodist church is being built within three blocks of First Community. It has owned the lots a long time. Six years ago members of the Franklin county council of churches bound themselves not to erect buildings within a mile of existing churches in thinly populated areas, or within a half-mile in more heavily peopled neighborhoods, but this did not apply to sites already purchased. In Upper Arlington there is a need for churches, but at the western edge of this area a Methodist church building stands with a "For Sale" sign over its door.

First Community's members are not disturbed by this trend. In the first place, they don't think their church's position has ever depended on priority in time of good fortune in location. They believe that its ministry will continue to hold for it the pre-eminence it has attained, and if it can't do that, they don't want to put obstacles in the way of others. One reason for their confidence is the ability of their members to support an outstanding program of service. Of the 1,800 families represented in their membership, 400 are young married people. The average income per family is estimated at about \$4,000, and 90 per cent own or are buying their own homes. The church membership is predominantly "white collar," but it has many craftsmen and laborers, who are as much respected and as active as anybody else.

Today, at the crest of the economic cycle, First Community's members are prospering, although what will happen when the cycle dips is anybody's guess. Only 8 per cent of the members own the businesses which employ them. This does not count 42 physicians and surgeons and 19 dentists. The membership includes 60 attorneys and an equal number of professors and teachers. Twenty-four sci-

First Community Church of Columbus, Ohio, was chosen in The Christian Century's poll of 100,000 ministers as the church in a large city in the northeast part of the nation most worthy of study. States included in this section are Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, New York and the six states of New England. Other churches in cities of more than 100,000 population in this region which received many votes were Riverside Baptist, New York; First Methodist, Chicago; Madison Avenue Presbyterian, New York; Marble Collegiate, New York; Mount Vernon Methodist, Washington; Our Savior Lutheran, Detroit; First Methodist, Detroit; Messiah Lutheran, Philadelphia; and Park Street Congregational, Boston.

entists are members who are on the staff of near-by Battelle Institute, an organization for industrial research. Faculty and staff personnel of Ohio State University, which is three miles to the west, and many officials of the Ohio state government are members of the church. Ohio's Senator John Bricker also belongs.

The location of First Community Church in an environment which permitted it to become a strong church before competition became too heavy does not account for its success. The fact that these later years have brought to its neighborhood a large number of younger families whose incomes are above average and whose educational level is the highest in the city is not decisive either. These factors exist elsewhere without producing this kind of church. Why has First Community become the kind of church it is? And what is its kind?

A Full-Guidance Church

First Community is what its minister, Dr. Burkhart, calls a "full-guidance church." A member of his congregation says that this means that it covers life from the cradle to the grave. That is an understatement. The program of First Community begins long before the cradle and it extends beyond the grave, at least so far as surviving members of families are concerned. In between it gives its members and their families an unusual amount of personal counsel, service and attention. In no church of this series do the problems of individual members and families receive such sustained and intelligent attention. Its fame as a church which gives people effective help when they need it has spread so that every day, by personal call, telephone and even telegraph, appeals for assistance come. Few are turned down or evaded.

These appeals may begin with a father whose son is not doing well in school, who seeks the advice of Richard H. Bell, minister to men and women and himself a former school principal, and end with a series of conferences with the family and a program designed to improve the emotional climate of the home. They may begin with a telephone request from a Roman Catholic mother on the other side of the city for prayers for her daughter, who has gone to the hospital for a serious operation, continue in fifty or a hundred Community Church men and women, quickly apprised by a telephone committee, praying for her recovery, and end in her restoration to her family. They may begin with the discovery by one of the men of the church that a fellow employee is an alcoholic and end with both men sober and faithful members of a weekly "research" or prayer group. This goes on every day, all day long and far into the night. The entire staff of the church are trained in this personal and family ministry and regard it as the church's first claim upon their time. More than that, a group of about 80 members are also skilled along these lines and work steadily in this way.

From Birth to Death

Roy A. Burkhart is one of the most successful practitioners of the art of Christian counseling as a means of salvation in the American ministry. It is his conception of the ministry that is being carried out in First Community Church. He describes it this way: "The true church guides life from birth through all the years of life in the taber-

nacle that is the body. It guides life in the home and through experiences beyond the home in the way and the truth that is life eternal and in the love that is God as revealed in Christ. Second, it provides full guidance for the whole family so that within its house there will be the living church. Third, it helps the person and the family find the answers upon which all other answers depend, such as: "What is the purpose of life?" "What is the secret of prayer?" Fourth, only the church can take all the incentives of the community and call them into a hallowed teamwork for the fullest guidance of the person. In this teamwork all the resources of psychiatry, psychology, anthropology, sociology, philosophy—the symphony of the arts and sciences—may be brought to the service of a vital religion for all areas of living."

Dr. Menninger's Comment

What does this mean when reduced to the life of First Community Church? Karl Menninger, the famous Topeka psychiatrist, visited this church not long ago and wrote: "The inspiring First Community Church, Columbus, is providing the best example of organized mental hygiene that I know of or have ever seen." But the most striking validation of this church's ministry is found in its claim that among the 646 men and women from the church who were in the armed services during the recent war, there was not one instance of mental breakdown. When *The Christian Century* asked how this could happen, Dr. Burkhart replied as follows:

"We start planning for mental health before the child is born. Our premarital counseling is intended to produce happy Christian homes. Our classes for expectant parents are designed to provide the child with the right mental as well as physical environment. When children come into our prenatality school, we watch for a sign of deviation or abnormality in any direction. Parents discuss their children in parents' groups. We have 16 groups of young parents with 10 pairs of parents in each.

"We get a great deal of help through our church school. In one class we found that a certain small boy had a fantastic imagination. We tried to find out what was back of it, and discovered that his mother was an alcoholic who was confronting her boy with such terrors that he found refuge in strange flights from reality. If this had gone on it might have resulted in an adolescent with schizophrenia. But we started working on the mother and the boy's symptoms improved.

"We also make extensive use of psychological tests. Among others we use the Robert G. Bernreuter Personality Inventory, published by Stanford University Press. Children are tested by it the first time in the ninth grade and again when they become high school seniors. These tests help young people to open up and discuss the things that matter most to them. Comparison of results from the same test taken at intervals is instructive to counselors and counseled. We use the same test in premarital counseling. Every couple who is married here have a chart in their marriage book drawn from this personality inventory. We also use other tests. If we find deviations of any importance, we discuss the matter with the child and with the parents and take remedial action. We believe that such a course of action contributes to good mental health. In the entire

membership of the church, we have had only two cases of schizophrenia in 15 years."

This background was significant, but did it alone serve to explain the record of First Community young people under arms? When *The Christian Century* pressed this point, it was told that the church kept closely in touch with each service man or woman. Ministers of the church had personal interviews with each before they left. Church bulletins and letters were sent them every week. There was a time when the church was writing so many general letters to service people that it used two tons of mimeograph paper a month. Every time a soldier came home, Dr. Burkhart made it a point to see him and have a good talk. The church also worked with parents and wives to help them have the right kind of attitudes and to express these attitudes helpfully in letters. Altogether it worked and prayed very hard for its absentees, and had the satisfaction of knowing that this made a big difference to them. Out of this experience Dr. Burkhart wrote a book, *The Church and the Returning Soldier*, which had a big sale (17,000) right after the war.

Group Nurture Growing

Dr. Burkhart is coming to believe that for most people most of the time the spiritual experience of sharing with other Christians in a group process of mutual aid is more beneficial than personal counseling. He calls it group nurture, but the term has its limitations. For example, during the war men from this church often took the initiative when it was necessary and held their own religious services. Some are still doing so. A naval officer now on a small ship in Asiatic waters recently sent to the church for helps to make the services he is holding more significant. But this principle of personal initiative in outgoing service applies to the battles of peace also. A self-starting unit of Alcoholics Anonymous meets at the church. It is encouraged, but this church's policy is to try to relate alcoholics to its research or prayer groups. These are centrally related to First Community life, as will be seen later. They consist of a dozen or fifteen men who meet each week for cultivation of the devotional life and discussion of common problems and, above all, for the practice of prayer. A number of former alcoholics are members of these groups, and are of immense help to others so afflicted.

This diversified program brings amazing results. Broken homes are restored and others are kept from going to pieces. Mother after mother told *The Christian Century* how grateful they are that their children can grow up under the ministry of this church. Many people who once suffered the tortures of mental or nervous breakdown come to this church to find healing and wholeness. Estrangements between brothers and sisters or parents and children are headed off or reconciliations are brought about. Self-centered people are liberated from egoistic shackles and self-conscious people are helped to become fully participating members of groups of people who care for them. But the important achievement is that these people have come to know Christ through the life of prayer and in that experience of grace are free to love and live by dynamic faith.

While the counseling program of First Community Church is undoubtedly one of its most effective ministries, it does not stand alone. The pastoral and evangelistic con-

cern of the church is also vigorous and intelligently alert. This is developed mainly by the organizations, although it also penetrates every department of activity. First Community has 75 deacons. Each heads a "colony," which is a neighborhood group of 20 to 30 families. Deacons call regularly on families in their colonies. They report when anybody is sick or in trouble or should have a call from a member of the church staff. They are "the eyes and ears of the church." They ask each member to give them names of possible new members in their small "parishes" or of other people whom the church can help. It is the deacon's job to know all about the church and to see that members of his colony are similarly informed. This division of labor was adapted from the plan used by First Congregational Church, Los Angeles.

Colonies of Heaven

Every year a neat 50-page notebook is prepared for each deacon. It outlines how the church works and describes the services and activities which are available for persons of each age group. This book is thoroughly studied in the deacons' meetings. Deacons assume responsibility for securing pledges to the work of the church and enlist others to help them in all they do. Both the financial canvass and the membership visitations are integral to the spiritual ministries of the congregation. Another function is the organization of ushers for the four Sunday services. Moffatt's translation of Philippians 3:20, "We are a colony of heaven," might describe the deacons' conception of their task.

As might be expected, the organized women's work of First Community is also a very important part of its life. The Women's Guild has 800 members. These are divided into 14 groups, designated by letters of the alphabet. In addition, the World Missionary Fellowship has members from each of the 14. The guild is a very busy organization, and a meeting of representatives of all its groups tackles its business with the dispatch of a board of directors of a large community organization. It systematically keeps the church staff informed as to the health and welfare of its members and their families and is constantly on the alert for new members.

Support Minister Interne

The guild is raising \$20,000 to equip the kitchen and dining room of the new church. It pays \$1,500 into the regular budget of the church and finds the salary of the "interne." This year the "interne" is a Yale Divinity School graduate who is serving an apprenticeship at First Community Church. Next year a different man, probably from another school, will take his place.

The guild makes 100 calls a month on new members. It provides \$50 a month to a day nursery at Central Community House in a district inhabited principally by Negroes. Its committees work with the local juvenile court and help in an institution for delinquent girls. They are trying to get the state to open an institution for pre-delinquent boys. One guild group makes weekly visits to the veterans' hospital at Chillicothe, Ohio, where they sew for patients and provide them with magazines which they regularly collect from church members.

Just now there is considerable concern among the members of the World Missionary Fellowship because they feel

they have been unable to arouse a vital missionary concern in their members or in the church. Their concern is thoroughly justified. The guild gives \$300 a year to missions and this hardly meets an obligation of such importance. In this it suffers from the church's general lack of information on Christian work abroad. Out of its budget of \$120,000 a year, the church allocates only \$6,675* to its "Beyond the Church Program." This is around 5 per cent. Of this amount less than \$2,000 a year goes to foreign missions. Many of the women feel that the spiritual life of the church as well as the peace of the world would benefit from a wholehearted participation in the world mission of Christianity.

The church contributes more than any other congregation in Columbus to the Franklin county council of churches, which unfortunately is a rather weak affair. It also gives to the International Council of Religious Education, the International Council of Community Churches, the Ohio Council of churches and the Ohio Congregational association. It sends young people to work camps and supports the annual seminars of ministers who meet at the church to study its program. It helps a Chinese community church and the Student Volunteer Movement. All this is constructive, and nobody wants it discontinued. But it is hardly enough.

Ministry With a Mission

A major reason for the success of First Community Church is its sense of mission. Neither its ministers nor its people think of it as just another church. Instead they think of it as having a high Christian mission to its own people, to its community and city, and to American religious life. This is particularly evident in its staff, most of whom got their training outside the church but are the more deeply dedicated to it for that reason.

A large part of the notable growth of this church has taken place since Roy A. Burkhardt became its minister in 1935, although it could not have taken place if other ministries, particularly the ministry of Dr. Weist, had not laid the foundations broad and deep. Now however almost everybody except Dr. Burkhardt is convinced that the strength of the congregation is due to his leadership. "The Chief," as he is known to his associates, is 55 years of age. Born a Mennonite, he later joined the United Brethren Church, of which his wife was a member. He taught school, became director of young people's work for the United Brethren denomination and later carried the same responsibility on the staff of the International Council of Religious Education. After receiving the Ph.D. degree at the University of Chicago in psychology of religion, he accepted the pastorate of First Community Church. He has bought a home in Upper Arlington and expects to spend the remainder of his life here.

Life, Dr. Burkhardt now believes, can best be understood as an unfolding act of God's grace. He says that there was a time when he lost confidence in the church and that later he followed the "God is process" school of thought, which holds that successful living is accomplished by a series of "adjustments" of personality. But the demands of the pas-

*This does not include the support the youth groups give to one of the young people of the church who works for Church World Service, and the offerings at Christmas and Easter that go to overseas relief.

torate, of spiritually ministering to people facing the ultimate questions of life and death, showed the limitations of this approach. Then the war came, and he gratefully says that the boys from his church helped him to discover in new power the grace of God, the healing resources of divine forgiveness through prayer, the strength of faith and love. Now he moves forward with sure step under a profound sense of mission. Now for him and the church, training in the life of prayer is the heart of the church. Not long ago when he was away he wrote his colleagues: "The church is being reborn. We have hold of something leaping, alive, powerful."

Psychiatrists and Ministry

It is this conviction which has cemented former members of 36 denominations into the fellowship of First Community Church. Included in their number are many onetime Christian Scientists and over 200 former Roman Catholics, although no special effort has been made to win people from either group. It is this faith which impels a dozen of the young people of this young church to dedicate their lives to Christian service. It is this belief which has made three Columbus psychiatrists work consistently and enthusiastically in the program of this church, where they have discovered much that they can learn as well as many whom they can help. And it is this hope which has caused the church to abolish funerals, substituting "Services of Memory" for those who have been "reborn."

Dr. Burkhardt's sense of mission has found expression, among other ways, in the writing of 15 books. The most recent of these, *If It Were Not So*, is intended for the people of his congregation when they face bereavement. Among the others are *From Friendship to Marriage*, *The Secret of Life*, *The Secret of Happy Marriage*, *Understanding Youth*, and *The Church and the Returning Soldier*. Dr. Burkhardt says that his books *How the Church Grows* and *The Secret of Life* most fully describe what he and his associates are trying to do in First Community Church that has value for other churches.

Strong Sense of Church

Increasingly through this ministry the sense of the church has grown. Dr. Burkhardt is concerned that First Community Church shall not merely be an extension of his own personality, and this concern is growing stronger, although it has probably not yet found sufficiently effective expression. So First Community relates itself to other churches in many ways. For example, it joins them in observing the great days of the Christian year. For the last seven years, on the first Sunday in Advent, Dr. Burkhardt has delivered the Sermon on the Mount from memory. Christmas services are deeply religious and are one of the highest peaks of the year. New Year's is a time of services of renewed dedication, particularly for young people. (Each Sunday a different member of the senior high school class, scheduled long in advance and carefully coached, reads the Scripture at each of the morning services.)

Beginning with Ash Wednesday, the church observes Lent with special services each year. Last Easter Day, over 3,800 people came to successive services. Attendance on an average Sunday is around 1,500. Mother's Day is the great celebration of the Christian family at First Community.

Pentecost memorializes the gift of the Spirit to the church, and Armistice Sunday exalts its genuine concern with peace. Each Sunday morning at nine the church holds a service of holy communion. Four times a year the communion service is held without elements or symbols, after the manner of the Friends.

A Ministry of Social Concern

Another significant element in the growth of First Community Church is its ministry of social concern. This takes place on the highest level when church members carry into their daily decisions the spiritual investment the church has made in them. In a research or prayer group, of which there are seven for men, three for women and two for youth, The Christian Century heard the executive of a large company tell how the spirit of that research group had helped him and also a labor leader during some difficult negotiations then going on over a wage contract. Another member of that group has as a result of his participation in the group and in the church given a fund for training Christian leaders and made his own business a profit-sharing enterprise. The double tithe he gives to the church is matched by regular bonuses to his employees. A third man in that group was a former alcoholic, freed 12 years ago from inner slavery by prayer. He is now an active witness to the Christian faith and a successful salesman.

But this social concern finds other expressions. The church has the reputation in Columbus of being in the forefront in the application of the gospel to social questions. Its chief minister took the lead in Ohio in raising around \$25,000 for support of conscientious objectors in Civilian Public Service camps during the last war. He opposed universal military training and has often been the target of patrioters who cannot conceive that religious liberty has anything to do with democracy. Following the war Dr. Burkhardt and Ray Reinhart, a layman of the church, led out in forming the Columbus Council for Democracy. Racial discrimination in hotels and restaurants is against the law in Ohio, but the law was not being enforced. They took legal steps to get the law enforced. When the going got rough, a number of good people got hurt. Some are still sensitive. Several ministers, until then sympathetic, found reasons to soft-pedal the issue. But the council persisted, and First Community Church backed its minister, with the result that Columbus is today one of the few places in the country where interracial conventions can be held without discrimination.

Help Negro Congregation

When a Methodist Negro congregation lost its building, First Community Church invited it to use its facilities, which the homeless congregation did for over a year. Then Community Church helped its neighbor to collect material to build and the deacons of both churches did the construction. It is still a Methodist church.

One of the best monuments to the social concern of First Community Church is Central Community House. Located in an area of disintegration in downtown Columbus, this settlement was founded by members of First Community, working with members of St. John's Evangelical Church and other interested leaders. A St. John's layman gave the building. Its guiding spirit is still Miss Mado

Shore, a First Community member who began when the project was started. When the community house was opened, its neighborhood had the highest percentages of delinquency, tuberculosis and prostitution in the city. The figures are still high, but there is no doubt that they are lower than before because of this venture in Christian service.

When The Christian Century visited Central Community House, Miss Shore said that the neighborhood was going through a light depression. Unemployment resulting from the wave of strikes in November 1950 was the cause. Members of the Community Church have contributed 4,000 cans of fruit. A sewing class was making over used clothing. The seamstresses were paid and got first chance to buy clothing they might want to buy. Nothing is given away, and the center is a two-way proposition. For example, proceeds from the big Halloween party this year were dedicated by vote of the patrons of the center to the Salvation Army. A committee of First Community Church is surveying a site in another needy Columbus neighborhood to see if another project of this kind should be started. Central Community House now gets \$19,000 a year from the Columbus Community Chest.

First Community has developed a highly serviceable church camp on a 200-acre tract 50 miles from Columbus. To Camp Akita go groups of people of every age. Part of the present program of improvements being carried out is preparation of the camp for all-year operation. During the week The Christian Century was studying the church a party of 35 young mothers had scheduled the camp for their use. Leaving their children with their husbands, they drove down to the camp Saturday morning and were to return on Sunday evening. Each contributed \$5 for expenses.

Freedom Practiced as Well as Praised

The church believes in and practices religious freedom in discussion of controversial social issues. Its men's club invited a Legionnaire who had been very vocal in his criticism of Dr. Burkhardt to address it. It also asked its minister to give the invocation, which he did in good spirit. A few years ago Dr. Burkhardt spoke on a radio program sponsored by the steel workers' union. He said that corporations should raise wages but hold prices steady. Many First Community members were shocked at his espousal of this doctrine under these auspices but freely granted the minister's right to have a mind of his own. Recently a young people's group invited a labor leader and an employer to discuss the current claims of labor and management. A number of people did not fancy having a representative of the C.I.O. addressing their young people, but nobody suggested that the minister to youth find another job. And nobody was greatly disturbed when Dr. Burkhardt wrote for The Christian Century an article on the Kinsey report on the sex habits of the American male (*homo sapiens*) which was quoted in newspapers throughout the country. The right and obligation of Christians to try to apply the gospel to social questions is freely admitted at First Community, although the church has the same differences of opinion on such issues that are found in any other moderately prosperous congregation.

One of the most important reasons for the growth of

and activities the members are working for the church, but what is the church doing for the members?

12. The organization of this church is designed to circumvent its largeness. Can this organizing of the components be applied with success to other churches?

13. What is the function of a church? Should it be solely a place of worship, or should it be a community center?

14. Can this Olivet spirit be picked up and used in your own church . . . and if so, how can it be done? How does it start, from the minister or the congregation or a combination of both?

II. Evangelical and Reformed Church

New Knoxville, Ohio

1. What effect has the kind of farm life around New Knoxville had on this church?

2. What is the common ancestry of the New Knoxville community and how has this affected the appearance and upkeep of the farms and the life of the church?

3. What is the size of the village and the condition of the homes and stores? Are villages of this size disappearing or increasing in America?

4. In what ways do the parishioners keep abreast of the times? Is this partially responsible for the success of the church?

5. Have progressive farming and soil enrichment programs helped make New Knoxville one of the great churches?

6. How many farmers own their own farms? How many are mortgaged? Are many loans made? What can you tell about the people of the community from these facts?

7. What more can you deduce when you learn of the close ties New Knoxville maintains with relatives overseas? What does it say concerning the influence of their European heritage?

8. What factors have influenced so many New Knoxville young men and women to go into the active Christian ministry?

9. The church's teaching follows its religious heritage. Is the emphasis on dynamic preaching or Scriptural indoctrination? What are the main points in the common faith?

10. How is the pastor active in "secular" affairs? Are they then "secular?"

11. What effect on New Knoxville are industrialization, other churches, newcomers, rising population having? How do you think these will be met? Can the stable community church survive and/or grow by remaining as it has been, or will new conditions destroy its heritage, change the church membership and undermine its common faith?

12. Should this church seek a closer tie with other churches through a county council of churches?

III. First Church of Christ

West Hartford, Connecticut

1. To what factors do you ascribe the general attitude of most suburban communities in regard to church activities?

2. The fire which destroyed the church may have been a blessing in disguise. When the Beth Israel congregation offered their temple for the Congregational Church to use for worship, and the church accepted, wasn't that good for both?

3. Why did "New England Protestantism long ago stop breeding its own clerical leadership?"

4. Youngdahl spoke directly from the Bible; Elden relates Christianity directly to living. Which is better?

5. How should the church expect its minister to divide his responsibility between his family and the church?

6. What would the effect of five minutes of silence be in your church? Could it develop into an important part in your form of worship?

7. Among a minister's other responsibilities, should he be required to be the administrator of his church? Do you think that the laymen in the church should share more largely the responsibilities of running the church?

8. What can be done to alleviate the over-crowding in the children's Sunday school classes? Could the church be more efficiently used by spreading the time its plant is used? Why is it important that the teachers be well trained?

9. Do you think it right or wrong that the "unproductive" members of a congregation be asked to leave the church? Should one's form of worship be policed?

10. What is the effect of cliques in a church? Wouldn't the four-year shuffle tend to make each committee a little less stable?

11. Does a modern, smoothly operated, well staffed church school tend to turn out a mass-produced Christian?

12. What are the four factors that combine to make the West Hartford church one of the great churches?

13. What factors do you find that are similar to the Mount Olivet Church in Minneapolis?

IV. Bellevue Baptist Church

Memphis, Tennessee

1. Why was Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis likely to be chosen in The Christian Century's poll? What do you know about its denomination? Why do many Southern Baptists deny they are Protestants?

2. What is the membership of this church, of its Sunday school? Should church members insist on zoning restrictions to make room for the church's growth?

3. Why is Memphis one of the most strategically located cities in the South? How many Baptists in its trade area?

4. What is the main emphasis at Bellevue Baptist Church? Is this a sufficient reason for the existence of a church?

5. At what rate does this church take in members? How rapidly does it lose them? Is this a high rate of loss? Can it be attributed to the limitations of revivalistic methods? What other methods of evangelism are there?

6. How did the Southern Baptist Church become the dominant religious body in the South?

7. What are the four main elements of the Gospel as preached at Bellevue Baptist? Are these the most important, or are there important elements missing?

8. How does it happen that this church, whose membership is not of rich people, can give \$100,000 a year to missions and build a million dollar church?

9. Should a church have a definite, easily charted plan of organization and follow it, or should it make its organization, as Bellevue does, conform to the needs as they develop? Should the pastor be the center of the church's organization? If not the pastor, who should?

10. Is Dr. Lee a successful minister, in your opinion? If so, to what do you attribute Dr. Lee's success? If not, how does he fail?

11. Would Bellevue Baptist benefit if it took a larger interest in community affairs? Is it a church's duty so to do, whether it benefits immediately or not?

12. What do you think of the covenant Sunday school

teachers are asked to sign at Bellevue? If its terms do not suit you, how would you amend them?

13. Why should not other denominations have an organization similar to the Baptist Training Union? Could you have one in your church? What would its program be?

14. Is there any substitute for the concern of the church for the salvation of as many persons as it can influence?

V. First Methodist Church

Orlando, Florida

1. Where are the new frontiers of American life?

2. What are the four strong elements of First Methodist Church, Orlando?

3. Describe Orlando. How big is it? Where is it located? How many people in its trade area? How many winter visitors does it have?

4. How do Orlando people make their living? What effect does this have on their church life?

5. Describe First Methodist Church—age, size, rate of growth.

6. This church gives around \$25,000 annually to missions. Is that too large a proportion of the total? Does such giving weaken or strengthen a church? Should a minister's chances for promotion depend on the amount of money he is able to raise for missions and benevolences?

7. What part does denominational regularity play in this church? Is it possible for a church to be closely identified with its denomination and be a strong supporter of ecumenical Christianity at the same time?

8. Tell what you know about Orlando's most distinguished citizen and churchman. To what denomination does he belong?

9. What is the Florida Chain of Missionary Assemblies and what relation does the Orlando church have to it?

10. In what way is the age-level of the Orlando population reflected in the Sunday school of Orlando Methodist? Should most churches give special thought to developing a better program for older people, and if so, what should such a program include?

11. Contrast the vigor of the Orlando church against liquor with its inability to do anything effective against gambling.

12. Church women are taking the lead in this and other churches in working for interracial understanding and justice. Is this just another case of the extra zeal church women have or are women in an especially good position to make an effective contribution at this point?

VI. Trinity Lutheran Church

Freistatt, Missouri

1. To what extent is Trinity Lutheran typical—or untypical—of rural churches in general?

2. What part does the fact that it is a unit of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod play in its nature and its success?

3. Is the homogeneous culture of the Freistatt community, based on common origin of the people, responsible for the nature and success of this church?

4. What are the advantages, what the disadvantages, of such complete identification of church and community as exists in Freistatt? Is this a good thing for the community? For the wider culture of which it is a part?

5. Many other communities were founded as was Freistatt by people of common origin and religious belief, but few

have persisted with so little change through three generations. How do you explain this fact? Has the church promoted change or held it back? If so, why? If not, why?

6. What accounts for the firmness with which succeeding generations of Freistatters cling to the letter of Missouri Synod doctrine?

7. What elements in Missouri Synod doctrine work to make a difference in the lives of Trinity Lutheran members?

8. What features of the church's program are probably responsible for the total absence of crime in the community? For the integrity which makes such an impression on outsiders? For the reputation its young people make in the public high schools they attend?

9. To what extent would the intimate concern of the elders with members' problems and practices work in a community made up of people with different ethnic and geographical backgrounds?

10. What implications are there for religious education in the fact that revivalism has no appeal for young Freistatters as it does for young people in surrounding communities? In the fact that the minister does not have to "win back" his young people, worrying lest they be drawn away into other religious movements?

11. To what extent are other Protestants justified in their criticism of Trinity Lutheran for not prohibiting use of liquor by members? What is the church's attitude on this matter?

12. Is Trinity Lutheran's insistence on maintaining its own parochial school justified? Is the church's attitude against seeking government aid for parochial schools a good one?

13. The people of Freistatt have few contacts, other than in a business way, with people of surrounding communities. What are the advantages, the disadvantages, inherent in this situation?

14. The people of Trinity Lutheran Church have no contacts with people of other denominations and do not care to have. What do you think would be the effect of closer relationships?

VII. Olive Chapel Baptist

Apex, North Carolina

1. What were the original reasons for the founding of this country church?

2. Why was the church responsible for the founding of a school? Was this a secular educational enterprise or a parochial school?

3. The ministry of Olive Chapel, which concentrates on helping others, has been of immense service to its congregation. Would another church in the vicinity of Olive Chapel further help the countryside and its people, or would it be obstructive?

4. Do you think that a relatively stable population is responsible for Olive Chapel's greatness? Of what importance is similar ancestry among the people of a congregation? Would this make for an ingrown church, unfriendly to outsiders?

5. Has the ministry of Olive Chapel been responsible for its growth, or the lay membership? Which do you think is the most important, a strong leadership from the pulpit or a firmly knit congregation, or a combination of both?

6. Compare Olive Chapel as a community center with one of the larger city churches. Is it more important for a country church to be a community center or a city church? Could the money spent on the Community Center be used more fruitfully for something else—foreign missions, for example?

7. How many activities and committees does the church sponsor? Are the church buildings used for other "outside" clubs and organizations? If so, what are they and how do they relate to the church's work?
8. Why has Olive Chapel not grown in membership the past twenty years? How do you account for the rise in contributions from its constituents?
9. Do you believe that a minister should have a broad general education and be active in affairs outside his own congregation?
10. If rural churches are so numerous, and constitute the majority of the Southern Baptist membership, why have they been so neglected?
11. What do you think of Pastor Hendricks' six year program for the development of his church?
12. Are an attractive plant and good equipment necessary to a successful church? Could they be a hindrance to a church? If so, how should a congregation utilize their facilities to the best advantage? Do you think Olive Chapel is doing so?
13. Does a "many sided" ministry accomplish more for the members than a one-sided ministry? Would this vary according to the church's location? Could a church over-extend itself by participating in too many activities?

VIII. First Presbyterian Church

Hollywood, California

1. Why is Hollywood an important place for the church to be strong? How many churches does it have? How large is the city?
2. What is the membership of Hollywood Presbyterian? How fast is it growing? What does the church do to keep people from being lost in the crowd?
3. Tell how the Edward T. Greens got interested in the church.
4. This Hollywood church requires candidates for membership to make pledges of service and support before they are admitted. Is that a good thing? Does it help explain the success of the church?
5. What is the job of the "minister of shepherding"? What is a "flock"? How many are there?
6. Describe the "cordon of prayer." Can a church be a true church without prayer?
7. What are the duties of the "minister of weekday activities"? How did he help the Greens' son George? And how did their Sarah get interested in the church?
8. How many workers on the church staff? Does the average church member get more or less personal attention than the average member of a smaller church?
9. How is the church financed? What proportion of its contributions goes to missions? Is this too much or too little?
10. Who is Louis H. Evans? What is your impression of him as minister? What is his strongest point? His weakest?
11. What is the relation of the church to people in the motion picture industry?
12. Describe the duties of the six ministers. Are these duties part of the work of every church, or should they be?
13. Who is Miss Henrietta Mears? What do you think of the program of religious education of the church? Is training in secular education an adequate background for church school leadership?
14. What are the main points contributing to the success of the Hollywood Presbyterian Church? What does it have to teach your church?

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IX. Washington Prairie Lutheran Church

Decorah, Iowa

1. Where is Washington Prairie Lutheran Church? What kind of people and what type of community does it serve?
2. Would you attribute the church's success to the fact that Washington Prairie is a homogeneous community?
3. Are traditions important in determining the success or failure of this church? Of any church?
4. Are long pastorates desirable or undesirable in the development of a church's fullest ministry to its parish?
5. Granting that the strong emphasis on religious education at Washington Prairie is well placed, what changes would you suggest to help strengthen the program?
6. Is the attitude of both pastor and people toward Sunday baseball in keeping with Christ's teachings about the Sabbath? What about the sale of refreshments at youth meetings on Sunday?
7. Was it providence or coincidence that the weather remained clear throughout the period when the parishioners were building their new parish hall?
8. What three acts constitute the formula to which Washington Prairie Lutherans attribute the success of their building endeavors?
9. Is it wise for a pastor to have responsibilities other than the pastoral care of his parish? Could Pastor Engebretson operate a farm or do other work successfully if his parish were larger?
10. Is the conservation of soil a matter of Christian stewardship?
11. Given the facts about what Washington Prairie parishioners have provided for themselves, do you think theirs is an adequate contribution to missions?
12. What is the historical background of the Evangelical Lutheran denomination? How has Washington Prairie been identified with the history of this church body?
13. Does Washington Prairie follow its denomination's program? Is this an element of strength?
14. Why does The Christian Century say that this church is essentially ecumenical in spirit?
15. Why do its neighbors think Washington Prairie a great church? Do you agree with them?

X. First Presbyterian Church

Topeka, Kansas

1. In what ways is First Presbyterian Church of Topeka typical, or untypical, of Protestant churches in America's middle-sized cities?
2. What implications are there for Protestantism in America in the decline First Presbyterian experienced during the years when it rested on its laurels as a "leading church" in a prospering community? Is a tradition a good thing?
3. What implications are there for Protestantism as a whole in the fact that more than half of the current accessions are of those who were not formerly Presbyterians? To what extent is the church's lessening denominational emphasis wise?
4. What conclusions may be drawn from First Presbyterian's recent record about the possibilities for downtown churches?
5. What seem to be the church's main attractions to newcomers to the city? What does this imply about the sort of thing people are looking for today when they select a church home?
6. In what ways does First Presbyterian's success in trans-

XII. First Community Church

Columbus, Ohio

ferring official responsibilities to younger members, often to newcomers, have implications for local church administration?

7. To what extent has the stress First Presbyterian places on choir development and on carefully planned worship services been justified?
8. Do you consider that the total missions program of the church is helped or hindered by such separate efforts as are insisted upon by individual groups within the church organization? How?
9. First Church's program is admittedly weakest at the high school and college age level. What concrete steps might be taken to strengthen this part of the program?
10. In what way might the church make use of the wealth of psychiatric resources available in the community, resources which would be available if they were requested?
11. To what extent is the pastor a factor in First Presbyterian's success? From the facts available, what features in the church's program would insure its continued growth and service if he were called elsewhere?
12. What does the response to the pastor's sermons indicate as to the sort of thing many people are looking for when they listen to a preacher today?
13. Has First Church weaknesses in regard to social problems of the community? What are they? What does the church's attitude indicate about the social witness of middle-class Protestantism? How might it be led to awareness of its responsibilities and the need to fulfill them?

XI. Collegiate Methodist Church

Ames, Iowa

1. Who are the majority of parishioners in this church, and what specialized problems would that bring out for the minister, for church organizations, for the balance of the congregation?
2. Has this church always been as outstanding as it is now? Is it the only Methodist church near the State College?
3. What has been the main feature in this church's rejuvenation? How much does the relation between the church and the town contribute to its success?
4. How does Dr. Nichols relate his varied fields of study to Christianity? Does this help him to be particularly adept in his present position?
5. What was the main contribution to the "living of democracy" that Collegiate Methodist practices?
6. What prompted the successful student cooperatives and of what value were they to church, school and students?
7. In what ways has the emphasis and practice of religious liberty been shown at Collegiate Methodist?
8. Can the same means of personal and social evangelism employed at this church be used as a guide for your church? Should church members have to go out seeking new members, or should new members come of their own free will?
9. How important is Christian training, outlook and education in a technical field? Can such a field be a Christian vocation?
10. Iowa State College has abandoned official religious services. Do you think the change to having the churches care for them is for the better?
11. How is this church particularly suited for bringing students into the ranks of Christian workers?
12. What is the Wesley Foundation and what are some of its activities in connection with church and campus work?

1. What were some of the purposes behind the study of these twelve churches by editors of The Christian Century? Were these purposes realized?
2. How is the First Community Church of Columbus unique among the twelve?
3. When and under what circumstances was the church organized?
4. How many members does it have? What is their average income? What is the church's total annual budget? What does this make per capita? Is that an adequate per capita gift?
5. What kind of community is this church in and how much does that affect its success?
6. What were the reasons why it changed from a denominational to a community church? Do these reasons apply to your church?
7. What happened to this church during the depression? How large a debt is a church justified in attempting to carry?
8. Do you think the Methodist Church is acting as it should to build a church within three blocks of First Community?
9. What is a "full-guidance church?" Name its four points.
10. How does First Community help people so that they do not have mental breakdowns under stress, as it did in the late war? Why should the church regard it as part of its ministry to plan for the mental health of its members?
11. What part does prayer play in keeping mentally healthy? How does this church cultivate the life of prayer? Describe a "research group." Should you have one or more such groups in your church?
12. What are the advantages of the "colony" system as developed in this church? Who are the "eyes and ears" of the church? Is there a better way for a large church to keep in touch with its families? Does a small church look after its members more effectively?
13. Is it a good thing for ministers to serve an apprenticeship?
14. Do you regard this church's giving to foreign missions as adequate? Is lack of an effective relation to missions a weakness or a strength to community churches?
15. In what ways does this church reveal its sense of the importance of a social expression of Christian faith? Was its pastor justified in organizing a movement to enforce the Ohio law concerning the right of Negroes to equal treatment in hotels and restaurants, even though his group had to resort to lawsuits to get compliance? Should the church support conscientious objectors?
16. Do you think settlement houses like Central Community House are the best way for more prosperous Christians to help those who are more needy? Do they help solve the race problem or do they help perpetuate it?
17. Is supervised study a good thing for a Sunday school? Could your church make use of two to three hours in religious education? Should young people's interest in "doing something" about their religion be confined to social questions, or are they equally concerned with deep personal and theological questions?
18. What is the "experience of sanctuary"? Is this adequate as the central purpose of the church?
19. What does this church have to teach other churches?

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